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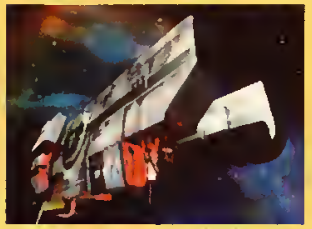

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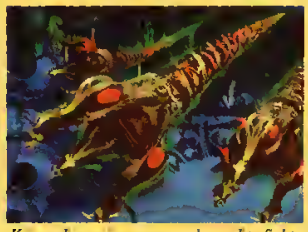

Krinn aliens give you arcade-quality fighting and, if you're not careful, a short life.

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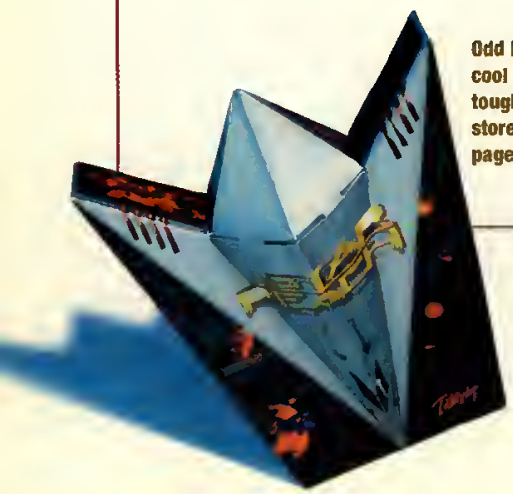

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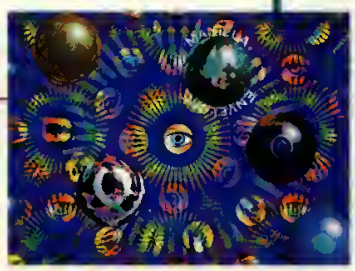

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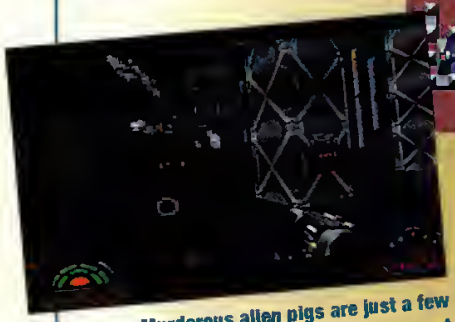

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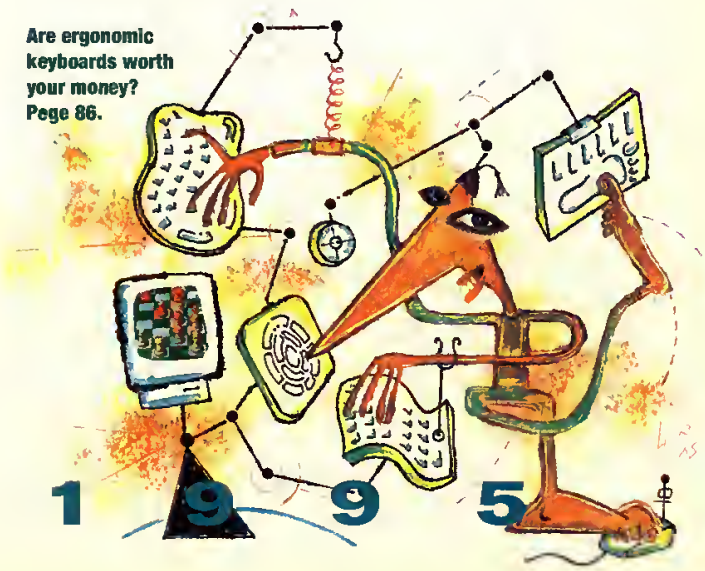

Are ergonomic keyboards worth your money? Pege 86.

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Editor's Page

Fredric Paul

The More the Merrier

I was at one of those insufferable multimedia industry conferences recently, and the panelists all seemed to agree on just one thing: The audience for interactive entertainment consists primarily of 30-year-old guys who can't get a date on Saturday night.

That's not entirely fair, but the solitary nature of most computer games and multimedia titles gives the argument at least a grain of truth. Sitting in front of a computer screen doesn't particularly lend itself to interpersonal interaction. And frankly, for all their entertainment value, most games leave little room for other people. It's just you and your computer. If you want to get your friends involved, you can either tell them about your high score or let them watch you play. Either way, it isn't too exciting.

Fortunately, that's all starting to change. As local-area networks blanket America's offices and the Internet worms its way into America's dens and living rooms, games are finally learning to communicate. As E^2 contributor Vox Day points out in "Don't Play Alone" (page 42), game developers are taking advantage of the technology with a new generation of games that still deliver great game play against the computer but reveal another dimension of fun in multiplayer mode.

The results are impressive. Everyone knows it's more fun to play tennis than to swat the ball at a brick wall. And although games like Heretic, Marathon, Falcon 3.0, and Fighter Wing are perfectly fun to play against the computer, they're even more entertaining when you're matched up against—or along with—one or more human players.

Even when you think you've mastered a game, adding the human element injects new life and new excitement. Once the best Doom players at *Electronic Entertainment* worked their way through Doom II, for example, the distinctive sounds of shotguns and BFGs began to fade from the halls. But hook four PCs together in Deathmatch mode, and suddenly the roar of dying Cacodemons once again interrupts story meetings.

Blasting away at human-controlled opponents reveals new complexity on every level. And it's just as much fun to cooperate with other human players to clear out the computer-controlled monsters. You can set traps for bad guys, cover each other's backs, and work together to solve the game's puzzles.

The ascendance of networked multiplayer games may also help to ease the antisocial image of computer games. Although the ability to play without an opponent helped establish the market for computer games, the chance to interact with others will attract new players and inspire developers to create even better games.

And with an office full of people playing, shouting, and shooting crossbows together, with friends on opposite ends of the country teaming up to fly wingman for each other, computer games may rival the Internet and online services in creating virtual communities. If this keeps up, the new put-down may be "couldn't get a Doom II Deathmatch date for Saturday night?" Wouldn't that be a switch?

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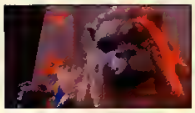
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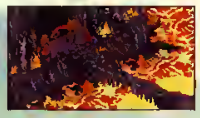
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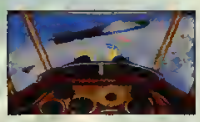
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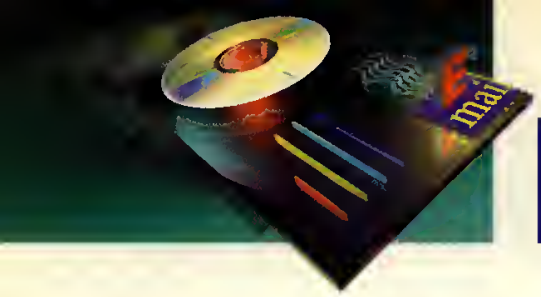

Letters

Multimedia Memories

I have a few comments on Ann Marcus' multimedia feature ("Multimedia Survival Guide," February 1995, page 57). One of the best features of DOS 6.22 is the menu system for creating custom AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files. A menu system can be created in a much shorter time than it takes to configure a boot disk, run MemMaker, and apply the undo function needed to return to your optimum Windows or DOS configuration.

The menu system appears after the machine boots, and the user simply chooses which configuration to use. Designing the menu system is much less complicated than running utilities like DoubleSpace or SmartDrive. Your customized AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files can then be fine-tuned by MemMaker as needed.

One last point in reference to reading manuals: Most applications and programs include a README file that you can access with the DOS Editor or Windows Notepad. They usually contain updated information that is not available in the manual.

C. Morrison
Panama City, FL

Catapulting Online

I recently read about a modem from Catapult that is to be used in conjunction with the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo Entertainment System. The modem will put you online and give you e-mail access. Is this something connected to America Online or Prodigy, or is a new service from Catapult available?

Matthew Baltsar
Whitehall, PA

Catapult uses special modems designed for a Genesis or Super Nintendo that connect via a proprietary online service. Catapult modems do not work with PCs, and the service is not connected to any computer-based online service. —Ed.

Changing Teams

Rebel Assault for the 3DO is one of my all-time favorites. I read your review of TIE Fighter (Game of the Month, November 1994, page 76) and was highly intrigued. Is LucasArts going to be distributing TIE Fighter for the 3DO?

Jason Drakeford
Lilburn, GA

We're sorry to disappoint you, Jason, but LucasArts has no plans for a 3DO version of TIE Fighter. In fact, there are no immediate plans for any LucasArts 3DO games, but the company has assured us that doesn't mean there won't be any in the future. —Ed.

Time=Money!

First off, I've been receiving *Electronic Entertainment* since it changed from *PC Games* and think it is excellent. You put in more concise game info, news, and platform reviews than any other publication I've seen. I trust your reviews and pattern my purchases after them.

The one thing that I hate about games is how quickly they can be beaten. I bought Under a Killing Moon after reading your Guided Tour ("Take a Midnight Walk," January 1995, page 73). It's a great game, but I beat it in six hours over three days. I didn't even use the hints you provided. Now I am stuck with a $70 game that is worthless to me.

In future issues, maybe you should add ratings for "average solution time," "value," or "game length" in your reviews. I've been burned by too many short games. Also, do you have any suggestions for great long-playing games?

Nathan Sanfilippo
Greensburg, PA

You make a good point, and E² tries to indicate excessive shortcomings in game length within our reviews. The Under a Killing Moon review noted that the game's puzzles were quite easy and that this shortened play-time. Lands of Lore and Kyrandia Book III: Malcolm's Revenge from Virgin Interactive should keep you busy for a while. —Ed.

Back to the Books

My family enjoys playing computer games, but we are often stumped, requiring a hint book or telephone hint line. The latter is very expensive, and we don't even get to talk to a human being. The games we are currently playing—Kyrandia Book III: Malcolm's Revenge, Hellcab, Hell, and Critical Path—don't seem to have hint books. Are there any books published for these games?

Diane S. Gorodetzer
Warminster, PA

Prima Publishing has books on Hell and the Kyrandia series. For Critical Path tips, check out our March 1994 review (pg. 96). As for Hellcab, we couldn't find anything. —Ed.

Out of the Sty

I found the letter from Lorna Farnol ("(Computer) Men are Pigs," January 1995, page 6) quite offensive. I don't think men consider computers to be just "toys." I can assure you that there are no games on my household computer. My family and I use the computer for reports and letters, and I use it to type final drafts for school. Not all men see computers as just "toys."

Scott Golec
Glendale, AZ

Whoops!

In our Sharp Edge preview of Big Top Production's Felix's Cartoon Toolbox (February 1995, page 11), we misprinted the company's phone number. The correct number is 800-900-7529.

In our "Strategy Guide: Doom II" (March 1995, page 54), the cheat code for changing levels was misprinted. The actual cheat code is "idclev" plus the level number.

Got something you want to get off your chest? Do it! Write, fax, or e-mail us at: Letters to the Editor, c/o Electronic Entertainment, *951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7781; Internet address, e2@iftw.com; MCI ID: 619-7340; and CompuServe: 73361,265.*

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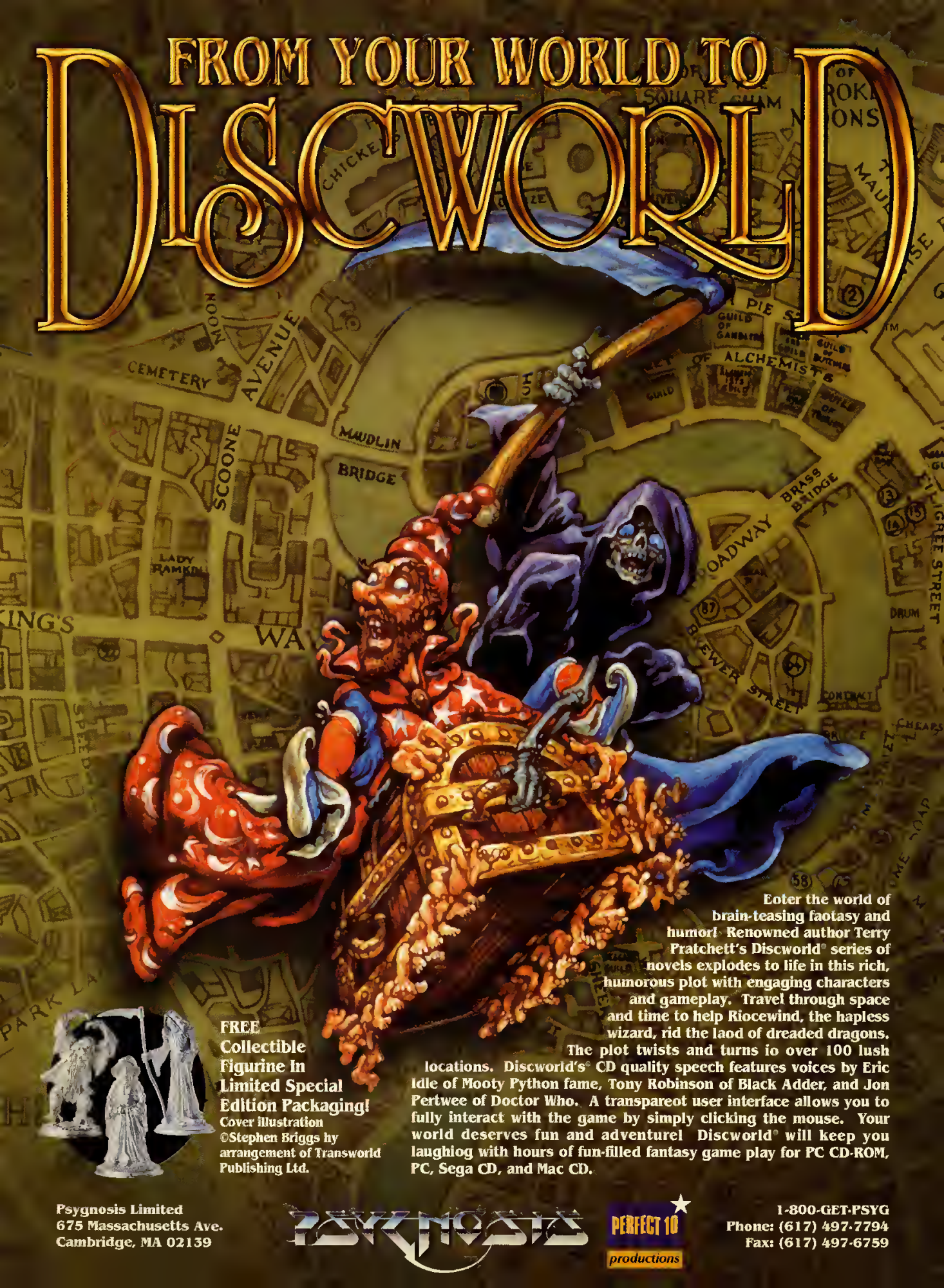

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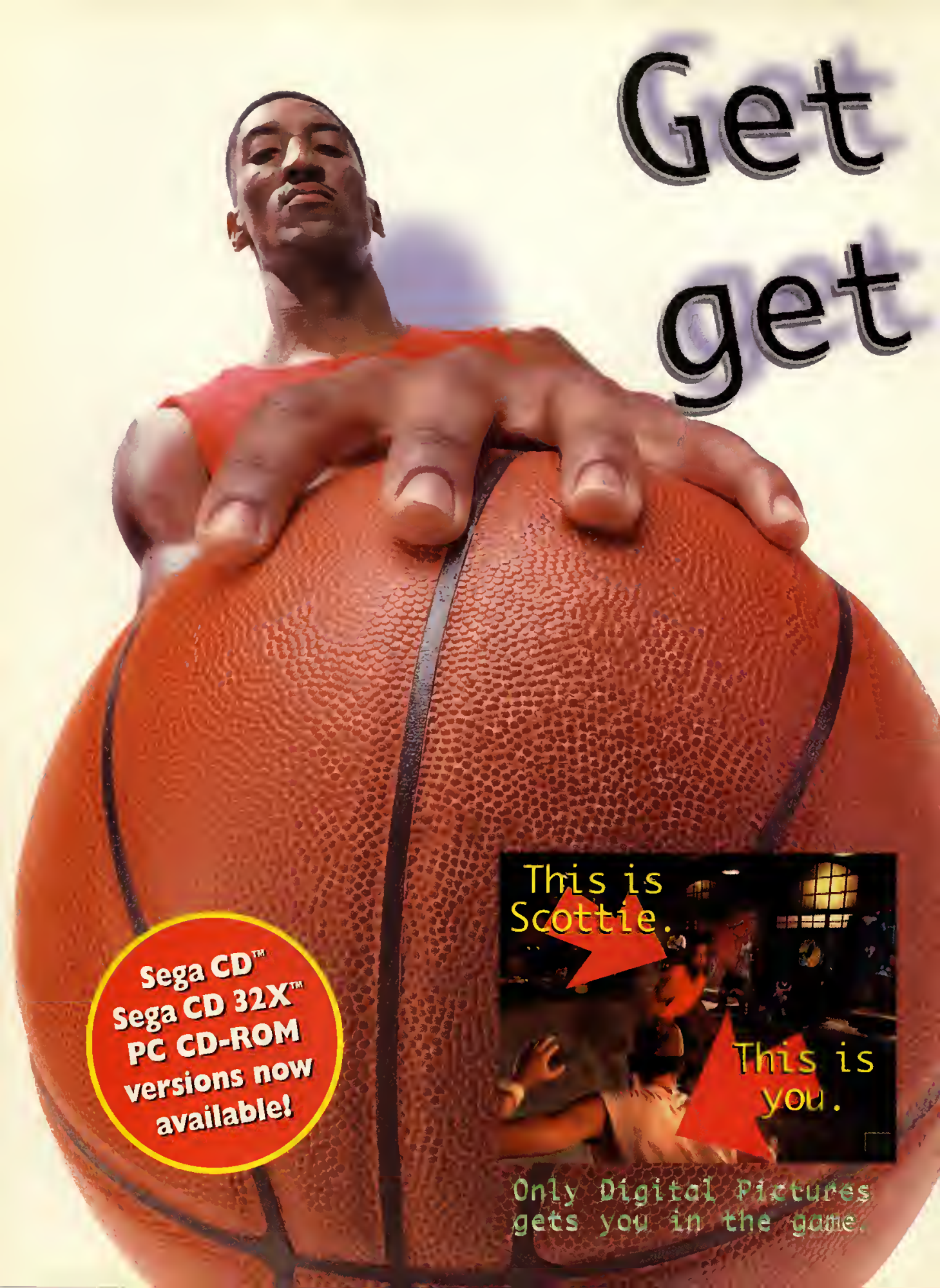
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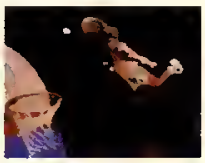

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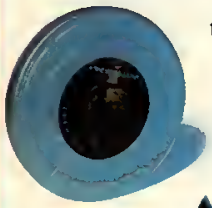
SHARP EDGE

Box Concertos

Pity the poor software box. Rigid. Uniform. Relying only on splashy color and big type to differentiate itself from its similarly uniform neighbors. Yet, trying to get an odd-shaped box onto software store shelves is like trying to put a rhomboid-shaped peg in a square hole. Retailers relish the simplicity of stacking and displaying standard software containers.

But entertainment software developers want their boxes to be as much fun as their products. So the boring rectangles are being joined by octagons, trapezoids, triangles, and even weirder shapes—all designed to get your attention. You've probably seen Knowledge Adventures' six-sided packages and the floppy version of The Even More Incredible Machine with its innovative opening mechanism (just pull the cat's tail).



Of course, unusual boxes aren't all fun and games. For starters, they're much more expensive to design and produce than traditional shapes. And they don't always do the job for which they were designed. A source at Interplay discloses that the original starship-shaped box design for the Cause and Effect puzzle verion of Star Reach looked really cool, but it collapsed when the company tried to shrink-wrap it. Interplay opted for a slightly different design that could take the pressure.

Some retailers are relaxing their restrictions on what they'll display, but Jennie Evans, director of marketing at Origin Systems, says most large retailers are still quite strict. Origin got around the problem with its Wing Commander III Premiere Edition Hollywood-style movie film canister by selling the product only through direct sales in the U.S. The ones sold in Europe, Evans notes, had to be put into square boxes.

—Christopher Lindquist

PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

When Fast Isn't Fast Enough

Attention Pentium owners: Prepare to have your "I've-got-the-fastest-PC on-the-block" bubble burst. There's a new chip coming to town.

Intel hasn't officially announced its latest PC processor–nicknamed the P6–but already hardware and software developers have been receiving briefings on what the new chip will offer, including a super-fast on-board caching scheme and the ability to "guess" what instructions a program will ask for next to help speed execution.

According to Intel, the 133MHz P6 should deliver twice the performance of today's 100MHz Pentium without any change required to your software. That means larger, smoother video–all the way up to full-screen–and the ability to perform reliable voice recognition in both games and multimedia titles.

Intel hasn't yet decided how much to charge for the P6, but you can expect it to be considerably more expensive than a Pentium. PC makers also must design totally new motherboards for the P6, which should inflate system prices even more. But if you have the dough to blow, you can put a P6-based computer in your den by year's end. ***–Christopher Lindquist***

Platform: PC
Ship Date: Late 1995

Jumping Off The Page

Bloom County's Berkeley Breathed goes digital.

It was inevitable that the work of some of the wackier cartoon artists would leap off the page and into the realm of multimedia. Storyopolis, the new Los Angeles-based company/bookstore/gallery backed by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, is taking up the cause. Storyopolis will offer *I, Leonardo*, a CD-ROM storybook from Ralph Steadman based on Steadman's interpretations of the notebooks of Leonardo DaVinci. Steadman is best known for his frenetic line-art contributions to the books of gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson and to a plethora of *Rolling Stone* covers.

Also brewing is a multimedia version of *Red Ranger Came Calling*, a storybook by Berkeley Breathed of Bloom County/Opus fame. Breathed did a multimedia "reading" of *Red Ranger* at Storyopolis' gallery space last December, replete with digitized video scenes from the book created by Apple Computer. Storyopolis even has plans for a TV version of the Breathed book. (Storyopolis; 310-358-2500; not yet priced) *—Donald St. John*

I Do (...Need Help)

Planning a wedding can take longer and be more frustrating than getting through Myst, and you won't get another chance to do it right. But think of the upcoming **Emily Post's Complete Guide to Weddings on CD-ROM** as the ultimate electronic manual for the big event. The disc is based on Post's bestselling etiquette book and can help you through the confusion of planning your ceremony, reception, and even the honeymoon.

The multimedia Emily Post sets you straight on wedding attendants and lots of other details.

You'll find info on potential locations, catering and menus, seating arrangements, photographers, music, and more. The Guide also helps you track guest lists, gifts, the budget, and all the other spiraling wedding minutiae. If you don't know where to start, just switch to Wedding Consultant mode. And, of course, you'll find plenty of good ol' etiquette from Auntie Em herself, served up in tasteful video clips. As a wedding gift, HarperCollins throws in the hardcover book free. (HarperCollins Interactive; 800-424-6234; $49.95) *—Christine Grech*

Platform: Win CD
Ship Date: April

The Gang's All Here

90210: It's more than a ZIP code, it's a frame of mind.

Love 'em or hate 'em, you've gotta admit **Melrose Place** and **Beverly Hills 90210** are hot TV properties. Byron Preiss Multimedia knows it: Later this year, the company will ship multimedia titles based on both of these Fox TV hits chronicling the trials and tribulations of L.A.'s Beautiful—but severely messed up—People. Each CD-ROM will feature more than an hour of video clips, photos, trivia, an episode guide, a calendar, and a print shop. (Byron Preiss Multimedia; 212-969-6252; not yet priced) *–Christine Grech*

Platform: Win CD
Ship Date: Fall

Learn about biomechanics in How Animals Move.

Bust a Move

You've probably wondered how birds fly, but have you pondered how ducks waddle, snakes slither, and rats pronk? You'll find the answers in **How Animals Move**, an upcoming CD-ROM from Maris Multimedia.

The disc explores the science of biomechanics, or animal movement, to show how all kinds of creatures get around. Animations and video illustrate the concepts, while 16 games let you learn by undertaking a variety of simulations. Control a fleeing gazelle as he's stalked by a cheetah, for example, or build original animal types and see how they might move using. (The Discovery Channel Multimedia; 800-762-2189; $49.95) *–Christine Grech*

Platform: Win CD/Mac CD
Ship Date: April

SHARP EDGE

ONLINE OFF-RAMPS

ABC's area on America Online covers all aspects of its programming

NEWSFLASH

- Another Saturday night and you ain't got nobody? Skip the dating scene and get your hands on **Love Bytes: The Online Dating Handbook,** which details the ins and outs of online encounters. Love Online begins with the "netiquette" of technological trysts, prepping you to find the hottest meeting spots in cyberspace. The 300-page book is sprinkled with do's and don'ts from couples who met on the wires and includes free online time—five hours from Delphi and a month from Prodigy—so you can practice your skills. (Waite Group Press; 800-368-9369; $18.95)
- Looking for a place to buy your CD-ROMs? **Mr. CD-ROM Stores Inc.,** an upstart software retailer crammed to the rafters with its namesake platters, is expanding. The Orlando-based store is looking to create franchises around the country. Each store will feature more than 1,400 CD-ROM titles for both Mac and PC. (Mr. CD-ROM Stores Inc.; 800-528-7822)
- If you were GT Interactive Software, the company that brought us Doom II, what would you do next? Would you believe edutainment? The company has inked a deal with children's author Mercer Mayer, who first made a splash in the interactive software world with Living Books' Just Grandma and Me. The same dynamic duo will be creating programs that star Mayer's Little Critter on the PC, as well as other gaming platforms. The first title, **Me and My Dad,** is scheduled to be released this fall. (GT Interactive Software; 212-951-3000)
- Thanks to the Internet, you

continued on page 14

News about the Internet is everywhere you turn—in newspapers, magazines and on TV. But the media's involvement in the Internet is a growing story itself.

CBS's impressive Web page (**http://www.cbs.com/**) offers late-breaking news as well as inside stories on *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *The Late Late Show with Tom Snyder*. You'll get pictures of stars, program scheduling and descriptions, and links to other media-based WWW pages. You can also subscribe to Letterman's Top 10 list by sending e-mail to the new address: **listserv@listserv.clark.net** with SUBSCRIBE TOPTEN in the body of the message.

NBC gives profiles and pictures of its hottest stars on America Online.

Not to be outdone, **NBC** has set up a Web site for *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* at **http://www.nbc-tonightshow.com/** featuring monologues, gags, behind-the-curtain footage, program listings, and quotes from notable guests.

Dave's back.

Check out the **Usenet newsgroup** series **rec.arts.tv.*** for pithy commentary on the tube. There's **rec.arts.tv.mst3k,** which focuses on the antics of Comedy Central's *Mystery Science Theater 3000,* and **rec.arts.tv.soaps** for the sudsy residue of daytime TV dramas. The **alt.tv.*** group includes such gems as **alt.tv.beavis-n-butthead, alt.tv.commercials,** and **alt.tv.simpsons.**

America Online has a slew of TV topicals. Choosing the keyword "ABC" takes you to an elaborate forum that includes coverage of the daytime soaps, games, and talk shows, as well as the play-by-play on ABC Sports. **MTV** has its own presence (keyword: **MTV**). Catch more serious fare through the CNN Newsroom (keyword: **cnn**). Find out who's next on the hot seat with **Ricki Lake** or **Geraldo** (keywords: **ricki lake** and **geraldo**). Or, catch the legal drama at **Court TV**'s Law Center (keyword: **court tv**).

Delphi has a TV/Movie special interest group. (Type: GO GRO TV) You'll get messaging; Internet, Usenet, and gopher access; and a database of files. Delphi also has some insider Fox TV material (such as *The X-Files* and *FX Channel* goodies), as both companies are owned by Rupett Murdoch's News Corp. Type GO ENT to look over Delphi's full Entertainment menu.

With so much material about TV online, you may find yourself spending more time reading about it than watching it!

—Andy Eddy

You can hear your breath,
your boots pounding on metal stairs.
There's only one way out.
20 more feet...15...10.
You're almost there when suddenly
from out of nowhere
an 8-foot-tall green alien drops down
and lunges at you with a spear, leaving you
approximately .08 seconds to act.

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mention the superior processing speed
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Power Macintosh

Apple

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NEWSFLASH

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won't have to be at San Francisco's **ARTROCK Gallery** to score at a current auction of autographed rock-and-roll poster art. The auction, which benefits the **Save The Earth Foundation,** is also being conducted on the Internet's World Wide Web. Interested parties will be able to view images of signed posters of such renowned musicians as the **Rolling Stones, Lou Reed, Talking Heads,** and the **Red Hot Chili Peppers,** and bidders can make offers at the Web site. Information on the Web address for the auction, which runs from April 22 through May 21, can be found at: **http://www.ccurrents.com/cc/.**

■ **Delphi** users, rejoice: Your long wait for a graphical interface may soon be over. The online service has inked a deal with **Netscape,** maker of the leading World Wide Web browser software, to license its Netscape software. The interface will be built on open Internet standards such as TCP/IP and HTML (the language used for most Web pages). Delphi is currently the only commercial online provider with full Internet access, including telnet—a necessary service for playing multi-user dungeon (MUD) games. But it is late in going graphical. Even the oft-maligned **Prodigy** now sports a graphical Web browser, which registered a reported 258,000 enrollments in the first 30 days after adding the service, logging an estimated 10-15,000 hours of use daily. Those numbers may go higher still once Prodigy releases its flashy new P2 interface in mid-summer.

Star Talk with Charlton Heston

If there was ever a man born to play a biblical heavyweight or a wild-eyed Roman chariot driver, it's Charlton Heston. Tall, strapping and clench-jawed, age has done little to slow the septuagenarian who brought Moses to life for millions in the 1956 classic The Ten Commandments *and won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his title role in the 1959 flick* Ben-Hur. *Heston was one of the first actors to work in television, appearing in adaptions of Broadway plays as early as 1948. And almost 50 years later, he's taking on the interactive frontier in a new CD-ROM.*

Charlton Heston's Voyage Through The Bible will arrive this fall from Jones Interactive. Electronic Entertainment *contributing editor James Daly recently spoke with Heston about this new artistic palette.*

Charlton Heston as Moses in the 1956 classic *The Ten Commandments.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY S.S./SHOOTING STAR

***Electronic Entertainment :* How do you think CD-ROMs will impact the acting profession?**

Charlton Heston: I think Steven Spielberg is right. This is the future of movies. Just as we saw silent films go to sound, then color, then move into video, this is the next frontier. It opens up an exciting new world for actors. We shouldn't be intimidated by it. Of course, if they advance the technology too much, they won't even need actors. And then I'll be in trouble.

***E²*: Do you see the group experience of going to the movies disappearing?**

CH: That's already happening now with video. The real loss is that marvelous feeling of sitting together in the dark and letting someone tell you a story. Now you will watch a video by yourself in the dark, or with your family at home. I guess they call it cocooning.

***E²*: What's the ramification of interactive CD-ROMs from a storyteller's perspective? Don't you think people just went to be entertained and be kept spellbound without having to work at it?**

CH: I would hope people will be intrigued by seeing more. With the Bible CD-ROM, the first level is straight narrative, then we add a little bit of background, and finally a vast database of background notes. But I still think the straight narrative will always be the first and best part.

***E²*: PCs and CD-ROM drives are certainly not affordable to everyone. Won't this alienate a portion of society that can't afford access to this entertainment technology?**

CH: Forty years ago, TV sets costs $800 or $900, so they were owned largely by at least middle-class families. But the price dropped, and they were available to everyone. That's happening with PCs. And this will need to continue happening, because this really is the future of movies. Not all movies, of course. You couldn't make a CD-ROM of *Dumb and Dumber.* Well, you could, but what's the point?

There you are, flying through the air
with the greatest of ease when
the air-to-air missile locks on you
and starts homing in. Let it close to 4 miles.
Roll 90 degrees into it and start laying chaff
and flares like crazy. It's still coming.
Keep turning. G forces. Everything's going black.
Turn harder or you're dog meat.
You're dog meat.

Even a Power Macintosh
can't do everything.

Games for the Power Macintosh™ computer have better graphics and smoother animation.* Thanks to the sizzling processing speed of the PowerPC™ chip, they also deliver dismally timely, realistic payloads.

Power Macintosh

To find out where you can take a test run, give us a call at 800-538-9696. Then go strap yourself into the cockpit of an F/A-18, and be prepared. The animation won't jump, but you may have to.

Apple

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NEWSFLASH

from page 14

■ Expect more realistic sound on the newest **Pentium** PCs, thanks to Intel's deal with QSound Labs. The agreement to port the **QSound** 3D audio technology to the Pentium should let developers take advantage of the enhanced sound capabilities for Pentium games and multimedia titles in time for the '95 holidays. The software links audio to moving visual cues to create a more dramatic effect. QSound is already incorporated into the Atari Jaguar, Sega 32X, and Saturn game systems.

■ If faster is better, **Plextor's 6PleX** six-speed CD-ROM is a winner. Forget quad-speed: The 6PleX supports data-transfer rates up to 900 Kbps, half-again as fast as the 600 Kbps rates of 4x models. Due out late this spring, models will range from $600 to almost $740, depending on connection and configuration. The drive will also come bundled in some multimedia systems, like those from Micron Computer Corp. (Plextor; 800-475-3986; PC/Mac; $599-$739)

■ **PC** stands for both "personal computer" and "politically correct." Quistory Ltd. attempts to bring these concepts together with **Queers In History.** Based on the floppy disk product, the Windows and Mac CD-ROMs will feature info on more than 750 people, from history and the present day, openly declared or identified as gay. You'll find Socrates, Alexander the Great, Susan B. Anthony, and many more. There's even a trivia game called Queeries. But the title treads on dangerous ground by including the names of nearly 70 living personalities merely rumored to be gay. (Quistory Ltd./Inland Book Co.; 800-457-9599; not yet priced)

One-Piece Power

The 5200/75 LC packs PowerPC oomph into a tidy package.

With its new 1995 line of Macintosh computers, Apple is once again hoping to challenge the dominance of x86-based PCs. The innovative new units include a one-piece PowerPC model, a Macintosh with a built-in 486 chip, and MPEG video compression. Look for the units first as LC models for the education market; they're scheduled to turn up later this year as Performas with slightly different configurations and prices for the rest of us.

The top-of-the-line **5200/75 LC** stuffs a new 75MHz PowerPC 603 chip, 8MB RAM, a double-speed CD-ROM drive, and a 500MB hard drive into a clever one-piece box. The 5200's options include video and TV-tuner cards and Insignia's SoftWindows program to run Windows applications. The 5200 lists for $1,699.

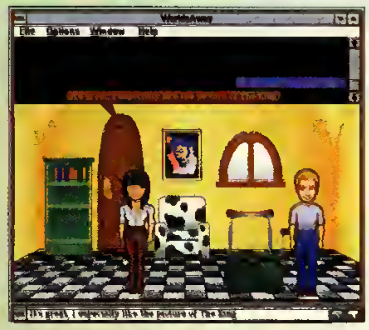
Mac lovers into PC games will like the new **LC 630 DOS Compatible.** You get a 66/33MHz Motorola 68040 chip and a 486DX2 66MHz processor on the same motherboard, so you can run both Mac and PC titles at full speed. The unit includes full Sound Blaster 16 compatibility as well as a joystick port, all for $1,899.

Both machines support Apple's new MPEG full-motion video card (due out this spring for less than $300 with bundled titles), but you'll need the separate Apple Video System card at $149 to use it. (Apple Computer; 800-767-2775)

—Fredric Paul

Format: Mac
Ship Date: April for schools, summer for consumers

Worldly Wonders



WorldsAway lets you safely check out a new friend's virtual etchings.

Ever wanted an alter ego? A version of you with more self confidence, more hair, less spare tire? Or maybe of the opposite sex? Well, CompuServe and Fujitsu Cultural Technologies want to make it happen for you. **WorldsAway,** due to appear on CompuServe later this year, is an online "virtual community" that mixes live chat with a customizable graphical environment.

WorldsAway takes the concept of MUDs–those text-based group-fantasy environments thriving on the Internet–to a new visual level with animation and, eventually, real-time speech. It's populated by "avatars"–graphical characters users design to represent them in this interactive fantasy world. Choose a head (not necessarily a human one), a body (of either sex), clothes, and other adornments. Your creation can wander the common areas, or you can design your own personal space–a swanky apartment, say–for entertaining other agreeable avatars.

The initial version of WorldsAway looks a bit hokey; the stiff, cartoony avatars lack detail and don't move their mouths. And although Fujitsu plans to upgrade the design options as the fledgling service gains momentum, communication is currently restricted to colored thought bubbles that appear when you type text into the chat box. CompuServe plans to roll out the service, now in beta testing, in July. (CompuServe; 800-524-3388; $4.80/hr)

–Donald St. John

Format: PC, Mac **Ship Date:** July

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"Best film action in a game yet!" --Johnny Wilson, Computer Gaming World

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Leader Board

The best-selling PC, Mac, and CD-ROM entertainment software

Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger, starring Mark Hamill, blasts onto the PC Games list at No. 3.

PC GAMES

1. **Doom II** The hair-raising sequel to Doom has more than 30 levels of mayhem, seven new hellish creatures, and a super shotgun for lots of unfriendly fire. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; DOS CD, street price $40-$50)
2. **Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this unique adventure game near the top of the Leader Board (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD, $55)
3. **Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger** Veteran Colonel Christopher Blair, played by Mark Hamill, battles the catlike Kilrathi. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD, street price $60-$90)
4. **King's Quest VII: The Princeless Bride** Save Princess Rosella from being married off to the next available prince. Along the way, meet 80 intriguing characters and visit six fantastic lands. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; DOS CD/Win CD, $64.95)
5. **SimCity 2000** Build your city of the future with this improved version of the classic urban-simulation game. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; DOS/Windows, $54.95)
6. **Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0** Upgraded graphics and new features keep this hugely popular flight sim soaring high. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, $49.95)
7. **TIE Fighter** In the newest *Star Wars* adventure, you no longer fight on the side of the Rebels. This time around, you're out to do Darth Vader's bidding. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927, DOS, $59.95)
8. **X-Wing Collector's CD** Fly six new X-Wing, A-Wing, and B-Wing missions with enhanced flight and ship graphics and new mission bnefings. (LucasArts Entertainment, 800-782-7927; DOS CD, $59.95)
9. **The 7th Guest** The ghost of Henry Stauf just won't go away in this haunting puzzler. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD, street price $39.99-$59.99)
10. **5 ft. 10 Pak, Volume Two** The second bargain-priced ten-disc compilation of games and multimedia titles includes Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective and the Home Medical Advisor. (Sirius Publishing; 800-247-0307; DOS CD/Win CD, $29.95)

After more than a year, Myst is still one of the top sellers in all categories on the Leader Board.

MAC GAMES

1. **Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this unique adventure game at the top of the Mac list (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Mac CD, $55)
2. **SimCity 2000** Build your city of the future with this improved version of the classic urban-simulation game. It's been a resident of the Mac Games list for more than a year. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; Mac, $54.95)
3. **Rebel Assault** Intense 3-D graphics and furious action highlight this *Star Wars* action/adventure. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD, $49.95)
4. **Links Pro Macintosh** Photo-realistic courses and players as well as humorous sound bites highlight this ground-breaking golf game. (Access; 800-793-0073, Mac, $49.95)
5. **F/A-18 Hornet** As many as four players can fly battle missions over the Middle East at the controls of state-of-the-art jets in this networked flight simulation. (Graphic Simulations, 800-255-6227; Mac, $49)

Escape with Princess Rosella as sha tries to avoid marriage in King's Quest VII, debuting at No. 5 on the CD-ROM chart.

CD-ROM TITLES

1. **Doom II** The hair-raising sequel to Doom has more than 30 levels of mayhem, seven new hellish creatures, and a super shotgun tor lots of unfriendly fire. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; DOS CD, street price $40-$50)
2. **Myst** Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles keep this adventure game near the top of the CD-ROM list. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD/Mac CD, $55)
3. **Disney's Animated StoryBook: The Lion King** Let your kids revisit Simba the lion and friends in this interactive storybook based on Disney's animated hit. (Disney Interactive; 800-688-1520, credit card; Win CD, $30)
4. **Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger** Colonel Christopher Blair, played by Mark Hamill, battles the catlike Kilrathi. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD, street price $60-$90)
5. **King's Quest VII: The Princeless Bride** Save Princess Rosella from being married off to the next available prince. On the way, meet 80 characters and visit six fantastic lands. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; DOS CD/Win CD, $64.95)
6. **Microsoft Encarta** Experience the world through videos, audio clips, animation, and text in this high-tech encyclopedia. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win CD/Mac CO, $99.95)
7. **Aladdin Activity Center** A collecton of games, puzzles, and art activities based on Disney's animated film *Aladdin*. (Disney Interactive, 800-228-0988, Win CD/Mac CD, street price $30)
8. **The 7th Guest** Henry Stauf's ghost won't go away in this puzzler. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CO/Mac CD, street price $39 99-$59 99)
9. **X-Wing Collector's CD** Fly six new X-Wing, A-Wing, and B-Wing missions with enhanced flight and ship graphics and new mission bnefings. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; DOS CD, $59.95)
10. **Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Technical Menuel** Check out a hand phaser, sit in the Captain's chair, and examine Picard's jammies as you wander the *Enterprise*. (Simon & Schuster Interactive; 800-983-5333; Mac CD, $69.95)

The Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling software in 1,300 retail stores for December 1994. Some titles may appear in more than one category. Source: PC Data.

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■ ***SMOOTH-AS-SILK ANIMATION*** *that can go as high as 60 frames a second — rivaling the hottest coin-op hits!*

■ ***16 HEART-STOPPING TRACKS*** *in different cities around the world. Each track features hidden shortcuts, power-ups, jumps, pitlanes, oil slicks — and its own awesome music soundtrack*!*

■ ***MULTIPLE CAMERA PERSPECTIVES.*** *Watch the action from practically any viewpoint by simply changing camera angles.*

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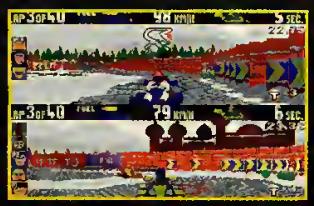
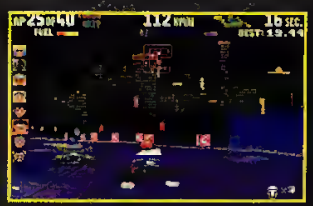
*CD version only.





6:02 AM –

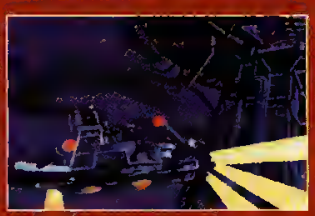
7:03 AM – HAD TEQUILA

9:31 AM – PUNCHED

12:02 PM –

6:31 PM – KICKED THE

MIDNIGHT – TOOK A RIDE AND



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WITH CORN FLAKES.
OUT THE BARTENDER.
CALLED MOM.
CRAP OUT OF 18 BIKERS.
NEVER LOOKED BACK.

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LUCAS Arts

Spotlight

BIG PERFORMANCE WITHOUT A BIG NAME

Star Quality

The Intelesys Star 90 is a class act: quality performance without the fanfare. (On screen is an extreme closeup of Velcro from Microsoft Scenes Brain Twister—see next page.)

PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

Not every computer needs a well-known brand name on the box to warrant your attention. Case in point: the **Intelesys Star 90** from Intelligent Computers and Technologies, which lacks name-dropping clout but compensates by giving you all the components of a top-notch multimedia PC—all for around $2,600.

That may sound a bit pricey, especially for an off-brand PC, but consider what you get for the money: a truly speedy 90MHz Pentium CPU; a necessary 8MB of RAM; a spacious 720MB hard drive; an ultra-fast Diamond Stealth 64 PCI local-bus video card with 2MB of its own memory; a *quad*-speed CD-ROM drive; a combination fax/14.4 Kbps modem/voice mail/16-bit sound card; a crisp, 15-inch Super VGA monitor; truly decent speakers with an AC adapter; and a pile of software, including Interplay's 10 Year Anthology as well as Microsoft's Works, Encarta, Publisher, and Money.

The Star 90's flaws are minor. You won't find posters to help ease setup, the cables aren't color-coded, and all the pieces are slightly different shades of beige, giving the system a mixed-and-not-quite-matched feeling. But the system's overall high quality makes up for any lack of aesthetic appeal.

And when it comes to horsepower, the Star 90 needs no apologies. Everything we loaded, from Hardball 4 to Mortal Kombat II, ran fast and without a hitch. Even the power-sucking U.S. Navy Fighters flew with more stealth than on other machines, thanks to the fast graphics card and local-bus disk controller.

If anything should go wrong, Intelligent Computers supplies the Computer Care Kit, a box of useful information that includes the user's manual, cards with information on creating backups and upgrading the system, and a Rescue Diskette designed to reset the computer to its original factory settings in the event of a major snafu. Intelligent Computers also offers 24-hour toll-free technical support, a 3-year limited warranty, and one-year on-site service.

Don't look for the Star 90 at your local computer store, though; Intelligent Computers ships the system only via mail order. (An identical machine, the P90/720, is sold under the Amerigo brand at about 400 retail stores.) If you don't need the status appeal of a well-known brand name, the Star 90 delivers the goods for less. (Intelligent Computers and Technologies; 800-577-2486; $2,599) *–Christopher Lindquist*

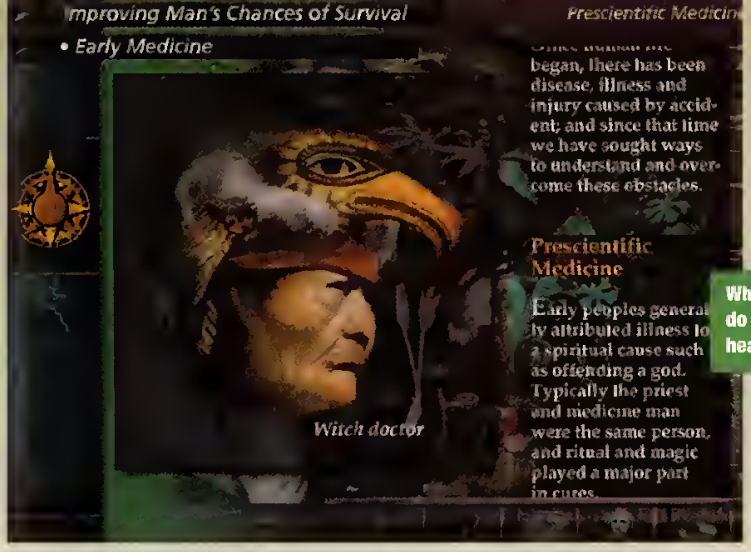
Format: PC
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Point and Click

Some people like trackballs, some people don't. Those who don't often complain that pointing with your thumb isn't exactly intuitive. Logitech's **TrackMan Vista** aims to solve that problem by letting you roll the ball with your index finger, while using your thumb to operate the main mouse button. We tested the Vista by controlling mouse-operated games like Jasmine Multimedia's VidGrid and confirmed the comfort of its unusual design. Also, the included software makes it easy to configure the two additional buttons for a variety of special uses, from double-clicks to drag-lock. Not bad, but Mac users and lefties are out of luck. (Logitech, 800-231-7717; street price $89) *–Fredric Paul*

Format: PC **Rating:** ★ ★ ★

Logitech's Trackman Vista puts pointing control under your pointing finger.



What did early man do when he got a headache?

History Lesson

Folks who go running for the tall grass each time the words "history" or "science" comes up may find themselves rethinking their prejudices with **Ideas That Changed The World.** The rich and satisfying disc is based on the best-selling book by Robert Ingpen and Philip Wilkinson and offers a zippy tour through history's greatest discoveries and inventions.

A gorgeous interface leads the way as you delve into history, exploring everything from early flint tools to ancient medicine through to the technological revolution. The simplistic text is redeemed by the first-rate presentation. When you're exploring early tool construction, for instance, the ambient sound of a hammer working steel adds impact to the material. (Integrated Communications & Entertainment/Cambrix Publishing; 800-992-8781; $49.95)

–James Daly

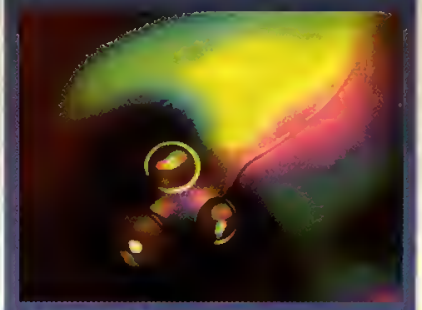
Format: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Look Again

Sometimes things look funny when you magnify them. The **Microsoft Scenes Brain Twister Collection** takes a micro- and telescopic look at the world, bringing a new perspective to ordinary objects. The screen saver displays unusual photographs of everything from the edge of a razor blade to grains of daisy pollen—even extraterrestrial soil. You can customize your screen saver with personal photographs; a mail-in service scans them in for a small fee (one dollar per photo). (Microsoft Home; 800-426-9400; $24)

–Joy J. Ma

Format: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★



Any guesses?

Answer: Neomycin sulfate (an antibiotic for earaches).

Say "Hello" To Bob

Microsoft **Bob**, a new Windows interface geared for home computer users, seems designed for people who watch a lot of Regis and Kathie Lee. It targets housewives—not rocket scientists, or anyone else with even an ounce of techno-savvy.

Selecting a room with a view is a breeze in Microsoft Bob.

Not a "who" but a "what," Bob is personified by a yellow smiley face with glasses. The 12 self-consciously cute "friends of Bob"—including a dog, a cat, a bug, and a coffee-slurping dragon—act as your animated guides through Bob's "house," a coloring-book-quality environment with five rooms that you can customize by adding and changing the furniture, knick-knacks, and even the view.

Your animated guides help you use Bob's eight integrated applications, including a calendar, address book, e-mail, electronic checkbook, financial guide, household manager, and letter-writer. There's even a version of GeoSafari—an educational trivia game.

When you enter a friend's birthday in the address book, for instance, the notation automatically appears in the calendar. You can also custom-design a birthday greeting for your friend in the letter writer, and then e-mail it using the address book and e-mail modules.

Bob's simple menus can guide you through the process of bringing in your existing icons to give you access to any of your other Windows programs from within Bob. Of course, once you load Bob's hefty 32MB onto your hard drive, you may not have room for many other programs.

Bob will be sold as a stand-alone product and will also come pre-installed on a number of PCs. Gateway 2000, NEC, and others have already agreed to bundle Bob with some of their machines, in much the way that Compaq, Packard Bell, and other vendors pre-install simple interfaces with their home computers. Pre-installation certainly makes the most sense, since anyone who is able to install Bob will probably feel stifled by its warm and fuzzy embrace. And while this version may lack sophistication, you can expect to see more "social interfaces" as the technology improves. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; $99)

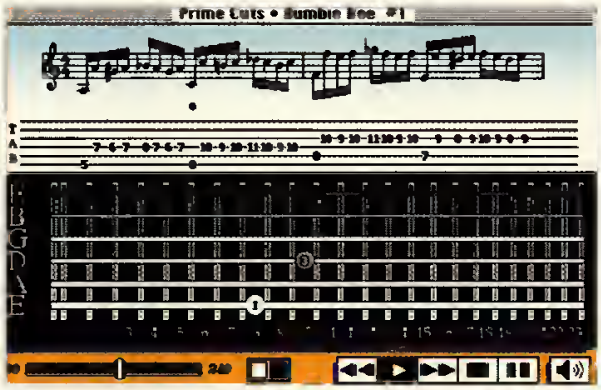
–Suzanne Frear

Format: Windows, Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★

Spotlight

MUSIC LESSONS

Wicked Chicken Pickin'



Can you catch Steve Morse—even at half-speed? Good luck trying.

In rock and roll—as in computers—fast is where it's at. New software from Lyrrus helps the two work together to get aspiring guitarists' fingers flying.

The **G-Vox Blender** collection of learning modules displays guitar exercises on the screen so you can master them at a comfortable pace and then speed up as you get better. Blender presents a utilitarian set of black-and-white guitar necks, with dots indicating where your fingers should go—sort of the six-string version of a "follow the bouncing ball" sing-along.

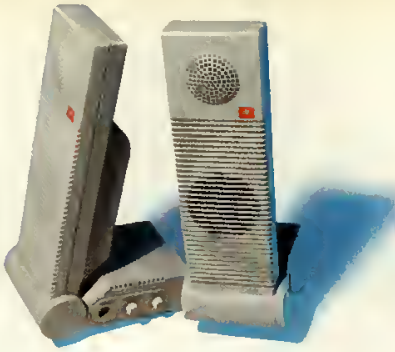
The program also displays traditional music notation and guitar tablature, not to mention a built-in metronome. The most important feature is the speed adjustment bar, which lets you begin at a plodding 30 beats per minute, then crank it up to a blinding 240 bpm.

The collection features workouts on basic scales and riffs—the distinctive series of notes or chords that anchor most rock songs. Although the examples are too short, they provide great technique and patterning, exactly what you'll need to get better.

Accomplished players will enjoy the Steve Morse Prime Cuts collection; the longtime leader of the Dixie Dregs is legendary for his lightning-fast, clean technique. It'll take true daring to match the master at 240 bpm. (Lyrrus; 215-922-0880; $49.95)

—Donald St. John

Format: DOS/Mac
Rating: ★ ★ ★



PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

JBL Sounds Off...Key

Some products should spend more time on the drawing board. JBL's **Sound Effects Media 2 Speakers** illustrate why.

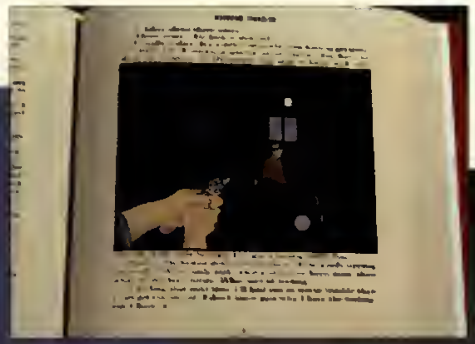
The 10-watt Media 2s have all the standard features plus a volume control, two inputs, bass control, and a powered-down "standby" mode when no sound is being played. When they are playing, they sound pretty good, although the slim cases simply don't have the resonance needed to deliver adequate bass.

Industrial design, not sonic performance, is the big problem. A trim profile usually saves desk space, but the Media 2's folding L-shaped design ends up confiscating more tabletop than most box-style speakers. You can't even mount them on your monitor. Hey, JBL, ever heard of Velcro? (JBL Multimedia; 800-366-4525; street price $100)

—Christopher Lindquist

Format: PC/Mac
Rating: ★ ★

Hard-Boiled Software



In the line of fire, Raymond Chandler-style.

For tough-talking, hard-loving fictional detectives, you can't do better than Philip Marlowe. Author Raymond Chandler brought the boozy, jaded gumshoe to life in a series of tense thrillers set in the mean streets of 1940s Los Angeles. *The Big Sleep, The Long Goodbye* and *Farewell, My Lovely* were not only sensational page-turners, but they also became film noir classics starring such greats as Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall.

Byron Preiss Multimedia's **Trouble Is My Business: The Raymond Chandler Library** uses CD-ROM to evoke Chandler's masterful smoke-and-sleaze ambiance—with mixed results. There are a handful of brief film clips (mostly guys knocking each other around), the full text of eight of Chandler's novels, a narration (in solemn tones) of the first few paragraphs of each book, a map of L.A. that lets you pull up photos of Marlowe's favorite haunts, and transcripts of some of Chandler's letters.

These bits of window dressing will thrill Chandler fanatics, but they'll never be able to measure up to Chandler's prose, taut and evocative, as subtle as a left hook: "Anna Halsey was about two hundred and forty pounds of middle-aged putty-faced woman in a black tailor-made suit," begins *The Big Sleep*. "Her eyes were shiny black shoe buttons, her cheeks were as soft as suet and about the same color."

Unfortunately, trying to read a novel on-screen will have you bleary-eyed before you're through with Chapter 1. (Byron Preiss Multimedia; 800-482-3766; $49.95)

—James Daly

Format: Win/Mac CD **Rating:** ★ ★ ★

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TRILOBYTE

MATURE
Suggestive Themes
Realistic Blood and Gore

Spotlight

WHEN BAD IS GOOD

Camp Horror

Such tacky fun, but such small images!

Reptilian monsters, extraterrestrials, and large frightening women: Does this sound like your love life? Actually, these are just some of the delights in Starlite Productions' four-CD-ROM gallery of old monster movies. **Science Fiction, Vicious Vixens, Trailers Spectacular,** and **Horrors** are chock full of previews and trailers from such B-movie classics as *Godzilla, The Blob,* and *Eegah!,* a truly awful late '50s screamer complete with shrill damsels in distress. Each disc includes a video screen saver and some provocative commentary. Unfortunately, the clips appear in a minuscule video window. If you look closely, though, you'll still enjoy the cheesy monsters and even cheesier acting. (Starlite Productions; 800-788-0787; $29.95) *—Joy J. Ma*

Format: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★

Letting You Off Your Leash

The Wireless Bandit offers full functionality for fighting and arcade games—and no tangled cords.

What could be better than unrestricted gameplay? AITech's **Wireless Bandit** gives you that freedom. The package includes a pair of wireless infrared multi-function gamepads and a receiver that plugs into your computer's sound card through the MIDI port. The receiver creates a particularly broad pick-up range by including three infrared receptors. In fact, the farther back you are from the receiver, the broader and better the reception is (up to 40 feet). The Bandit is a piece of cake to install, and it worked with all the games we tested. (Four AAA batteries are required.)

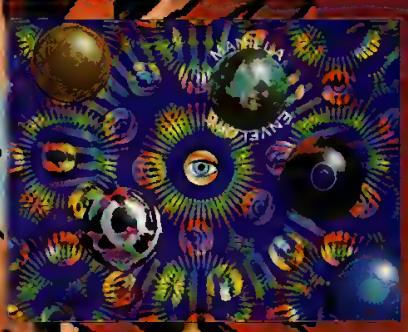
Beyond the standard A and B buttons, you'll find some useful extras. There are turbo functions for A and B, and each controller has a "professional function" switch that activates two Shift keys for making sneaky combination moves in fighting games. Finally, for scrolling shooters like Apogee's Raptor, the two hands-free automatic fire switches trigger a flurry of fire on A or B. Be advised, though: The hands-free switches are not as ideal for fighting games as for shooting games.

One small annoyance is that you have to keep the Wireless Bandit's controller level when you're playing close to the receiver. Drop the nose of the gamepad, and the signals may miss their mark. The Bandit works best when you sit farther away from the receiver in an area free of light-absorbing objects like dark mouse pads or wrist rests. Place the receiver beside your monitor (or even further back) if you sit right at the screen when you play.

If you've ever gotten tangled in your controller cord and missed a crucial uppercut, you'll welcome the freedom the Wireless Bandit gives you. (AITech; 800-882-8184; $59.95) *—Bill Meyer*

Format: PC
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Screen Psychedelia



HeadCandy: something for your mind to savor.

Bliss' interface lets you fine tune-your psychedelia.

Timothy Leary likes to say that "computers are the LSD of the '90s." If so, **Bliss** and **HeadCandy** are the lava lamps of the computer age.

Bliss Saver, Bliss Paint, and their associated add-on programs like Bliss Gallery, Geometric Bliss, and Waves of Bliss work together to create a "color synthesizer," letting you paint the screen with an incredible variety of animated patterns and colors. You can create your own moving masterpieces, or let the program run on its own as a screen saver. Silent, but very trippy. (Imaja; 800-294-6252; $29.95 for each add-on program)

HeadCandy, on the other lobe, mixes spacey music from Brian Eno and Robert Fripp with a three-dimensional kaleidoscope. Slip on the cardboard prismatic glasses and watch the colors swirl and dance. From the creators of Jump: The David Bowie Interactive CD-ROM, HeadCandy looks and sounds terrific, but it's essentially a passive experience. (ION; 415-455-1466; $39.95) *—Fredric Paul*

Bliss
Format: Mac
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

HeadCandy
Format: Win CD/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★

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Spotlight

GO WEST YOUNG MAN

Wyatt's West

If you get bored with "strolling" around Tombstone, skip the tour and go to the shootout game.

When it comes to legend, there's a thin line between fact and fiction. But Grolier tries to uncover the true grit of one of the West's most legendary towns and figures in **Wyatt Earp's Old West.**

The dusty backdrop is the tiny town of Tombstone, the site of the famous 1880 shootout at the OK Corral. After a short intro from George, your white-bearded narrator, the town's yours to explore. Visit any of 44 diverse locations—the hotel, saloon, cantina, etc.—by pointing and clicking on the photo of the building or choosing it from the map screen. Each building has a narrated explanation, and most can be entered to check out a number of hot spots—one with a video. For example, a tour of Sheriff Earp's office reveals a daily routine that was hardly glamorous—mostly checking cattle brands and keeping records.

The disc includes a trivia game and an arcade-style shooter like American Laser Games' Mad Dog McCree. Gunmen popping up and taking potshots at you add a little life to the ghost town, but imagine if you could buy some land, play some poker, or watch a public hanging.

Plus, while you hear snippets of information about Earp and his brothers, there's not enough to give a complete picture of the title's namesake—Wyatt himself. It would have been more enlightening to devote an entire section to his story alone.

Nonetheless, for a fun trip back in time to the days when the cowboy was king, catch the next train to Tombstone in Wyatt Earp's Old West. (Grolier Electronic Publishing; 800-285-4534; $49.95

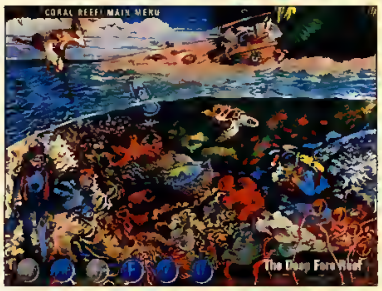
—Bill Meyer

Format: Win CD/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Wet and Dry

How can a CD-ROM be all wet and bone-dry at the same time? Arnowitz Studio's Coral Reef: The Vanishing Undersea World manages the trick by submerging you in hundreds of beautiful underwater videos, photos, and paintings, but overbaking the experience with a desiccated, academic presentation. Instead of highlighting the natural excitement of the deep sea, Coral Reef delivers its material in a tone reminiscent of an obligatory high-school science project. Despite a clear interface, complete with pop-up labels and summaries, attractive rendered backgrounds, and a good search function, Coral Reef's stories, tours, and special exhibits play like the slide shows everyone slept through in ninth grade. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; $39.95)

—Fredric Paul



Take a trip to a remote reef without a mask or flippers.

Format: Win CD/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★

The luminous voice of Sarah McLachlan is supported by multimedia extras on *The Freedom Sessions* CD-ROM.

Sarah Singer In the House?

New-age-folkie Sarah McLachlan may seem like an odd choice for multimedia pioneer status. But **The Freedom Sessions** from Nettwerk Productions proves that multimedia music discs can work well in any genre.

McLachlan broke out last year on alternative radio with her hypnotic single "Possession." Clips from the excellent "Possession" video, along with video cuts of six other songs from her three albums, serve up an aural and visual sampling of her work. The title also offers up vignettes of McLachlan talking about her work, her band, and her tours, including clips of her Thailand benefit tour. The package is rounded out with engaging artwork and eight unreleased audio-only versions of McLachlan tunes, including her sweet cover of Tom Waits' "Ol' 55"—a big 1970's hit for The Eagles.

Similar releases from lesser-known bands **Ginger** and **Mystery Machine** are also available from Nettwerk. (Nettwerk Productions; 800-764-3472; street price $15.99)

—Donald St. John

Format: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

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Spotlight

BUT WHERE'S MILLI VANILLI?

Just Grammy and Me

Harry Connick Jr. or Los Lobos? You make the call.

If there is one set of entertainment awards the world can do without, it's the Grammys—which honor accomplishments in musical entertainment. Just how seriously can anyone take an award that recognized The Anita Kerr Singers over the Beatles in 1965 for Best Pop Performance By a Group?

Despite its best efforts, Mindscape's **The Grammys** can't escape the enduring banality of its subject. To its credit, though, the Mindscape disc does a decent job of documenting—with minute-long QuickTime video clips—some of the rare highlights of the award ceremonies over the years. Particularly good are the 37 Grammy show performances: for every fatuous Harry Connick Jr. shot, there are sublime Miles Davis *and* rocking Los Lobos clips. You can watch these from the show program at the main screen or go into the screening room, where a nifty console lets you choose and save your favorite performances.

The Grammys' interface is an empty but engagingly rendered theater metaphor that includes seats, a main stage, and six doors that open into various "rooms" along the side walls, each of which offers a unique peek into Grammys history. The most interesting room is the Library, where you can search for information on Grammy nominees by name, year, or category. The search window is absurdly small, however, and you have to figure out for yourself that you can type into the grayed-out area to bypass the incessant scrolling.

Other rooms are hit-and-miss: One room contains not-terribly-revealing interview clips, while another offers a mildly amusing trivia game. The room with information on educational programs offered by NARAS—the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences—is duller than junior high music-appreciation class. (Mindscape; 415-883-3000; $59.95) *—Donald St. John*

Format: Win CD/Mac CD
Rating: ★★★

Digi-Snaps

Photo buffs looking to go digital don't have to spring for a scanner or a digital camera. For around $35, Seattle Film Works' new **PhotoWorks Plus** gives you everything you need.

You get a 20-exposure disposable flash camera; a roll of 35mm film; a coupon for free developing, printing, and digitizing your first set of pictures; and the PhotoWorks digital image-editing and storage software.

Just send your film (or the disposable) post-paid to Seattle Film Works. Within a few days, you'll get back 3½-by-5-inch prints, negatives, *and* a PC diskette with digital versions of your images. Plus you get a fresh roll of film and a new mailing pouch for your next order. After that, you'll pay $14 for the same package.

Seattle Film Works provides all you need for editing and storing your digitized images. Tools, like zoom, let you control the image's tiniest details.

The PhotoWorks software makes it easy to edit, organize, and show off your images. There's a nifty zoom tool and a number of special features to flip, transpose, posterize, and otherwise modify and retouch your images. You can organize your shots and other images into albums, set up a slide show, or use any of the images as a Windows screen saver. PhotoWorks stores images in its proprietary .sfw format, but it can import and export files in most popular graphics formats.

PhotoWorks is a great way to get into digital photography without breaking the bank. (Seattle Film Works; 800-445-3348; $49, street price $29-$39) *—Ann M. Marcus*

Format: Windows
Rating: ★★★★★

Get On The 'Stick

Gravis' Phoenix Flight & Weapons Control System upped the ante in the "My Joystick Has More Buttons Than Yours" competition when it debuted last fall. Unfortunately, it suffered from a less-than-ideal grip design, and its steep $120 street price made it seem like Gravis was charging by the button. The slimmed-down **Firebird** does without seven of the bigger bird's buttons, leaving it with a still-impressive complement of 17. The less expensive controller includes only an analog throttle control (the Phoenix also had a digital control) and no rudder control, so it takes up less desktop space. But this version goes beyond the Phoenix's already excellent software by letting you drag and drop to swap button commands or set the stick's configuration. And it makes it easier to print a list of settings for easy reference.

Gravis's Firebird is a sleeker version of the Phoenix, but still comfort-impaired.

The Firebird is hot, but not perfect. The grip still cuts into your hand, and the stick really needs an angled top and a four-way "hat" switch. (Advanced Gravis; 604-431-5020; $99.95, street price $69.95)

—Christopher Lindquist

Format: PC
Rating: ★★★★

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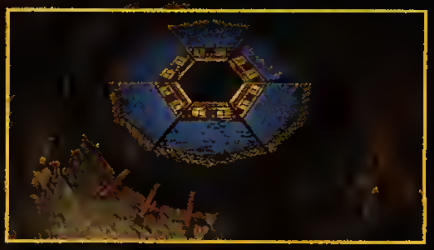

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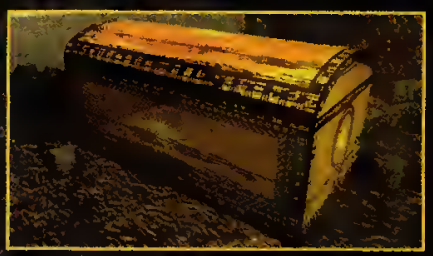

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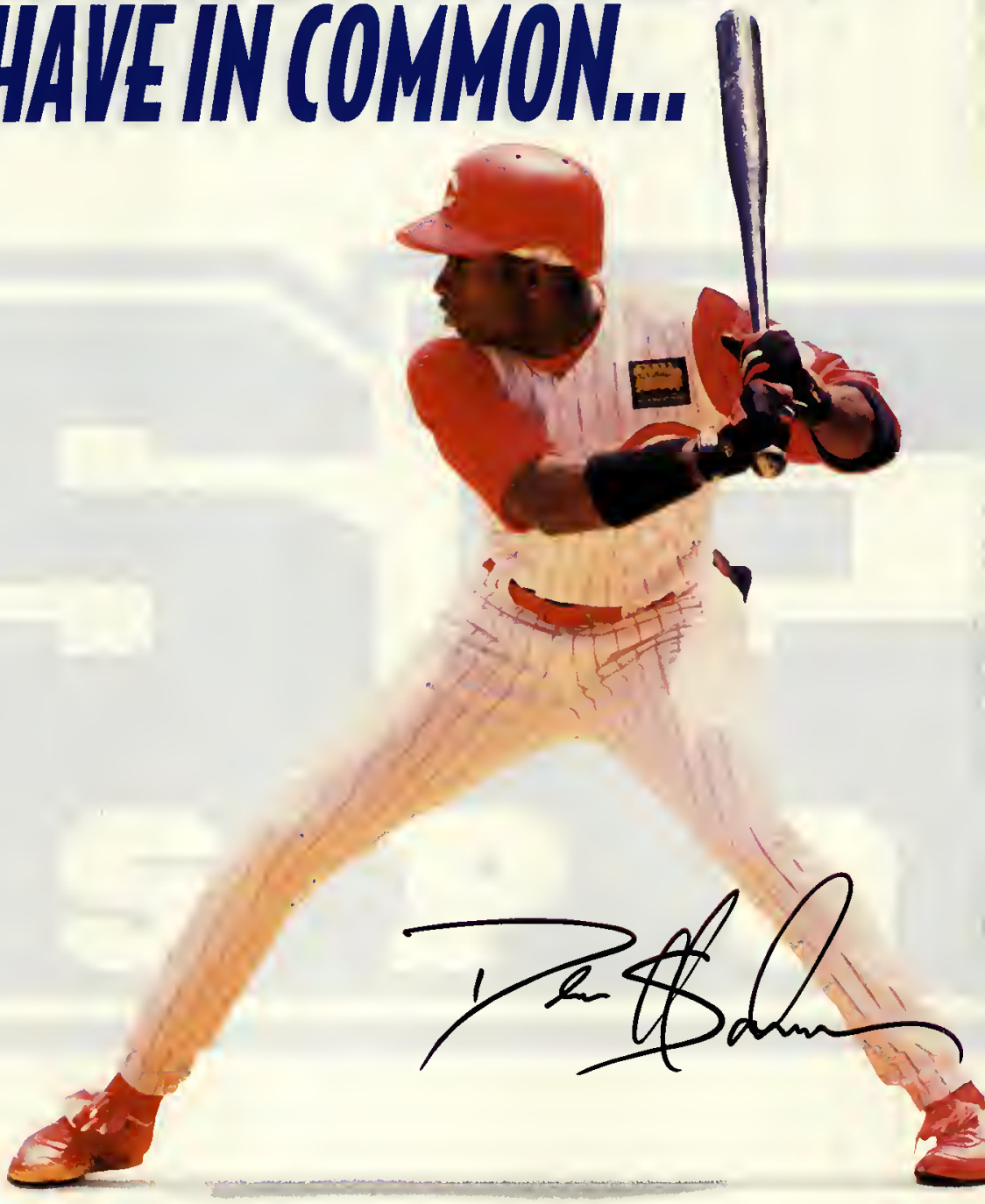
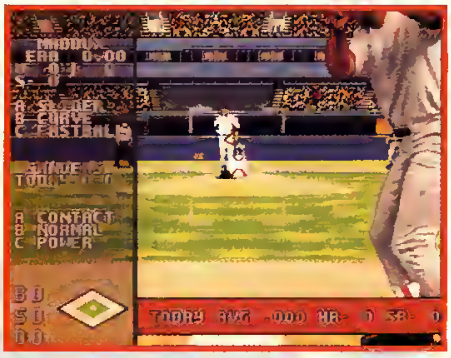


THEY'RE BOTH IN A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN.



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edutainment

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Proper Fun

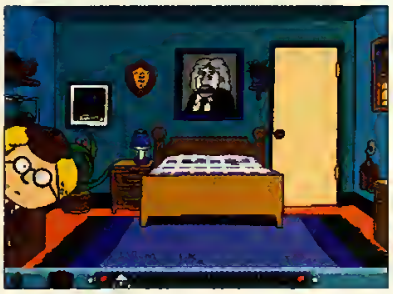
Alistair gazes at the Alien Invasion.

Meet Alistair Grittle, boy genius. Alistair hails from Twickadilly, and he's got a charming British accent and impeccable manners that would make the Queen Mother proud. And he's the star of Simon & Schuster Interactive's **Alistair and the Alien Invasion,** a delightful interactive storybook developed by Enteractive for ages 5 to 10.

Based upon the book of the same name, the story unfolds as Alistair is unexpectedly interrupted by invading aliens as he prepares for a big science project at school.

Like other excellent multimedia storybooks, such as the Living Books series and HarperCollins Interactive's George Shrinks, Alistair and the Alien Invasion features compelling characters, an interesting plot, fun hidden animations, and a healthy dose of music and songs. But breakthrough graphics make Alistair the best of the lot.

Developer Enteractive used Microsoft's new WinToon technology to create a three-dimensional world for children to explore. Kids can rotate each story screen 360 degrees to reveal more surprises. That's important, because unlike most interactive storybooks, which are made up of discrete pages, Alistair's 14 "pages" move through the same five environments—Alistair's bedroom, the classroom, the town, the spaceship, and outer space—as the action unfolds.



Alistair looks in on visitors as they check out his bedroom, one of five rotating environments for kids to explore.

Alistair and the Alien Invasion features many thoughtful extras for parents and kids. The audio help at the beginning of the program is easy for the youngest children to follow, and Alistair's clever asides will make even grown-ups smile. Five original songs and jazzy sound effects keyed to each of the exotic plants add to the fun. There's also a related game, The Alien Plant Quest, in which kids explore the story's environments searching for rare plant specimens. (Simon & Schuster Interactive; 800-223-2348; $59.95)

–Christine Grech

Platform: Win CD/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It's a Wild World

What happens to cavemen in outer space, or dinosaurs in the Wild West? Let the little ones show you in Kids World, a unique creativity program for ages 5 and up. Kids World is kind of like a paint program, but its electronic stamps are animated and interact with one another—often with unpredictable outcomes.

When the kids are done watching the action, they can turn it into a screen saver. Kids World scenes will work with any popular screen saver engine, such as Berkeley Systems' After Dark, Bit Jugglers' own Underware, and even the screen saver built into Windows. (Bit Jugglers; 415-968-39908; street price $30)

–Christine Grech

Platform: Windows/Mac
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

No fishing in outer space? Anything is possible in Kids World's animated scenes.

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Help Hyperman solve challenging science problems and stop Entrobe from ruining everything. Entrobe is bent on turning the world upside-down by altering the earth's chemical, physical and biological properties. It's up to you and the superhero Hyperman to save the universe from total disaster.

Discover the deep secrets of nature in Emma's science exploration lab. Create mutations in the evolution chamber terrarium. Find bizarre micro life with the high powered electron microscope. Learn how to use refracted light to squelch a volcano, make cows fly through the sky, and fly a stinky methane hot air balloon (whew!).

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THREE NEW SERVICES

Cyberspace Just for Kids

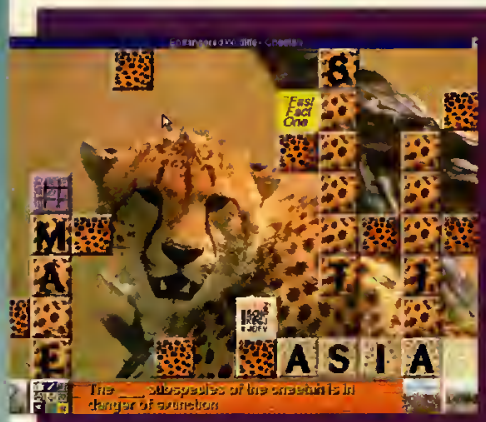
Kids love computers, and a new trio of interactive services caters just to them. Infonautics' **Homework Helper** is a Windows service available through Prodigy that's designed to help school-age kids do research. Just type in a question, such as "Who invented the steam engine?" or plug in a topic, such as "The Panama Canal," to search the database of articles, newswires, magazines, maps, photo libraries, encyclopedias, and other reference works. The program sorts the results to put the best matches at the top.

To see an article or view a map or photograph, click on the listing. There's no limit to the information that you can explore—except your pocket book. Infonautics charges based on the total time spent on the service, not per article. Adults will find Homework Helper a valuable resource, too. (Infonautics/Prodigy; 800-776-3449; $9.95/month, including two free hours; $2.95/hour after that)

What on Earth, a new cable-to-computer service, also lets kids explore information at their own pace. They get a choice of six multimedia news stories delivered to their—or their school's—computer each day. Kids can look at videos and photographs, and listen to sound clips while they read the story. What on Earth also features related games and learning activities. For access to What on Earth, you need TV-cable service and a Mac or Windows PC. (Ingenius; 800-772-6397; $150/year)

Finally, there's **The Slammer Whammer Network,** a wacky new bulletin-board service dedicated to the raging milk-cap craze (a.k.a. POGs, after the Papaya-Orange-Guava juice that the original caps covered). Kids can dial in to exchange playing tips, make trades, or just chat. The Network, hosted by Slammin' Sam, is free; you pay only for the phone call to Los Angeles. (The Imperial Toy Corporation; 213-489-2100; BBS access, 213-362-9033)

—Christine Grech



Young activists can help save the cheetah from extinction by solving the puzzle.

Save the Animals

In **Discovering Endangered Wildlife,** children 8 and up are called on a mission to help save Earth's endangered creatures. In the program's Discovery Tour, kids learn about 48 threatened animals by way of text, photographs, audio clips, and videos.

In the Discovery Game, the kids must save the animals from extinction—one at a time—by completing a grid composed of various puzzles and activities. When they complete the entire puzzle grid, a photograph of the animal appears to indicate that it's been saved.

The game is challenging and fun, and in a small way your kids really will be helping to save endangered animals, as Lyriq plans to donate 1% of the profits to the National Wildlife Federation. (Liriq; 203-250-2070; $49.95) *—Suzanne Frear*

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

X Marks the Spot

Help the crew of the Barleycorn find the treasure.

Searching for hidden treasure has always had its attractions, but it's even more fun with help from a ship full of mice. In OmniMedia's **The Treasure Hunt,** your kids can join Captain Mouse and his crew aboard the good ship Barleycorn as they solve their way through 15 puzzles and games to uncover the loot.

Based on a book of the same name by Amanda Wood, The Treasure Hunt is a delicately illustrated interactive storybook for ages 4 to 9.

Treasure Hunt's activities run from visual identification to an electronic coloring game, all designed to build cognitive, memory, and comparison skills. Impatient types can skip the story all together and go straight to the games.

With its beautiful water-colors enlivened with clever animations, it's difficult to say who will return to The Treasure Hunt more often, you or your child. (Sony Electronic Publishing; 800-922-7669, $39.99) *—Joy J. Ma*

Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

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AGES 4-10

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Game On

Corey Sandler

Why A Duck?

In the high-tech world of digitally compressed video, where less truly is more, The Duck Corp. is making visible waves.

Duck's TrueMotion technology is a scheme for delivering the multimedia holy grail—fully interactive, full-motion, full-screen video in personal computer games and multimedia titles—without the need for special hardware. TrueMotion algorithms compress full-motion video and audio within each frame and can be used on nearly all modern computers and game platforms. And unlike video-compression competitors such as MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group), TrueMotion is well-suited for interactive multimedia and games.

MPEG, originally designed for straight video applications, compresses video by specifying a key frame of information and then creating a set of differencing frames that include only the information that changes from frame to frame. Game developers who want to switch video paths or highlight a particular bit of information must wait for the next key frame before stopping the video stream. Just as important, users need an MPEG decoder card to play MPEG video with VHS-picture quality.

On a modem computer with a reasonably powerful processor, like a 486, 68040, or equivalent, Duck's software can decompress and display full-screen images at 24 to 32 frames per second at 640-by-480 resolution—without special hardware assistance. Faster processors bring even greater quality. Just as important, Duck's intraframe formula works like a roll of film, with every frame individually available. That's critical when computer video moves from linear couch potato mode to interactive action.

If you want to freeze the action at a precise point to make an important game decision or examine a particular video frame in an adventure game to look for a clue, TrueMotion will let you do it. With MPEG, the nearest key frame could be off by more than a half-second.

(Of course, many companies producing full-motion video games use proprietary technology. Games like IVI Publishing's Blown Away or Slam City with Scottie Pippen from Digital Pictures work their magic with their own video schemes.)

Duck's TrueMotion technology shows up in Off-world Interceptor.

Instead of just watching, you'll be able to pick up, rotate, and zoom in on video objects or characters.

The first uses of TrueMotion are already on the market. In Gametek's Quarantine (on DOS CD-ROM and 3DO) full-screen video introduces the story of Drake Edgewater, a 21st-century cab driver cruising in his modified '52 Chevy hovercab. Crystal Dynamics used TrueMotion to squeeze 24 minutes of full-motion video, along with a full game, onto its Off-world Interceptor 3DO disc. ABC/EA Home Software will use TrueMotion encoding in an upcoming Pentium version of Sesame Street: Numbers. And Capcom, the game maker that made a successful transition from cartoon video characters to big-screen motion pictures with its Street Fighter property, has licensed TrueMotion technology for future games.

But full interactivity will have to wait for The Next Neat Thing. The folks at Duck are working on something they call "Comprending," an amalgam of compression and rendering. Comprending converts a digitized image into a video sprite that you can move around on the screen. Instead of just watching, you'll be able to pick up, rotate, and zoom in on discrete video objects. Duck's latest demonstration system lets you independently manipulate an infinite number of video objects.

In a fighting game, for example, you'll control your fighter while also affecting the actions of the crowd, the ref, and many other background elements. Because each screen object is a separate animated sprite, you essentially take control of the game from the designer.

You'll see the comprending project in the upcoming release of Sega's 32-bit Saturn CD-ROM game machine. Duck's microcode has been embedded within Sega's SH2 RISC processor. Saturn games will let you control video sprites much more completely than on today's video or computer games.

But, as Chico Marx once asked, "Why a duck?" For a magical period in the early 1980s, IBM loosened its fabled blue-suited culture just enough to allow a group of relative renegades to create the IBM PC. Don Estridge and his crew in Boca Raton, Florida, were nicknamed the "ducks." Through the years, other groups of "wild ducks" have been employed by various companies for other non-standard projects. Interestingly, one of Lou Gerstner's first announcements when he took over at IBM was that he would bring back the ducks. The next generation of games will likely walk like a duck.

"THIS is cool"

—Computer Gaming World

5/5 Rating

Computer Gaming World—February 1995

94% Rating, Golden Triad Award Winner

Computer Game Review—February 1995

Winner—1994 Best Breakthrough Game

Electronic Entertainment—March 1995

Best Software Developer: Bullfrog

Computer Player—January 1995

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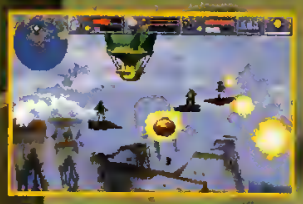

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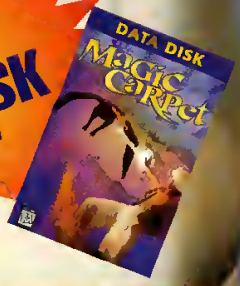

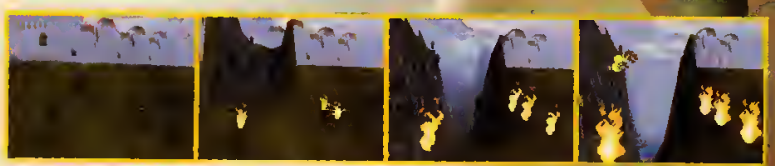

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Tube Man

Keith Ferrell

Keep Watching

On more than a few occasions, I've concluded this column with the encomium: "Keep Watching." Now I'm beginning to think my advice was misplaced, or at least premature. We have not yet, as it were, begun to watch.

The relationship between full-motion, live-action video and interactive entertainment grows more intimate every day. Everyone, it seems, is touting full-motion video computer games and multimedia. Everyone, it seems, is hyping games starring real actors—or at least real movie-of-the-week-level personalities. The classic examples are Wing Commander III, starring Mark Hamill, and Under a Killing Moon, featuring Margot Kidder and Brian Keith.

This may be—again!—a case of the technological cart getting ahead of the game-play horse. As computer and game-deck horsepower has grown, designers and producers have the chance to show more lifelike pictures, and to move those images in a more lifelike manner. The jump to filmed action seems like a logical step.

Logical, maybe, but risky. Think about it: A well-animated game offers us a world into which we can escape, in which we can fully participate. This is true whether it's Donkey Kong Country or X-COM: UFO Defense or name-your-own-favorite.

Live-action filmed games are different. For one thing, today's interactive video technology can't match the instant interactivity and infinite choices of games that render the action as they go. Players can watch only the action that the game makers put on the disc ahead of time.

With less control, there's less room for imagination and less opportunity to identify with the central characters. And when the filmed sequences remain separate from the game play, there's an uneasy balance between the filmed actors and the game itself.

The risk is that the game becomes more voyeurism and less participation. Compare Return To Zork, with its mini-movies and video cutaways, to the original text game. The text games were uneven and rudimentary, but they carried an imaginative freight that the new versions do not.

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID PETERS

Too many companies seem to think that video alone is all a game needs to make it great.

There's more to see now, but less to feel.

That may be unfair, because the simple addition of full-motion, live-actor video doesn't compromise a game in and of itself. It does, in and of itself, distract from the game. When there are imaginary (animated) figures on the screen, we can become them. When there are actors on the screen, we watch them.

Does anyone out there remember the *Star Trek* FOTONOVELS that Bantam Books brought out a couple of decades ago? Bantam took episodes of classic *Trek*, lifted stills from the TV show, and added narrative and dialogue balloons a la comic books. What you got was the best of neither world: They weren't novels, and they weren't comics. They were just collections of pictures with dialogue added.

On the other hand, think of the way Marvel Comics used to put the occasional photograph to work in Thor or The Fantastic Four. All of a sudden, you'd turn the page and there would be your comic book hero dropped into the middle of a halftone photo of New York, or the moon, or whatever. Very effective, very impressive—sort of like what you feel the first time you encounter video in Myst.

Technology has its place, but not every product will rest on the shoulders of Live! Action! Video! The best games—Myst, Wing Commander III, Under a Killing Moon, and others like them—will use video footage as one more technique in the interactive toolbox.

And as the technology improves, all-video computer games like the upcoming Johnny Mnemonic from Sony Imagesoft (Game News, February 1995, page 67) will blur the distinctions between game play and video sequences. These games will force you to pay attention to every aspect of what you see.

The lesser products, though, the ones that have video and nothing more going for them, will give us little opportunity to do more than watch—and keep watching.

Keith Ferrell is editor of Omni, *editorial director of General Media Services, and science and technology editor for* Penthouse, *each of which covers the interactive revolution in its own way.*

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DON'T
Network and modem games mean
PLAY
that electronic entertainment
ALONE!
doesn't have to be a solitary pursuit.

One of the best things about computer games is that you don't need another player to have a good time. The computer can be your opponent, letting you play whenever the mood strikes.

Ironically, though, gamers are discovering that computer entertainment is even more fun when several players go at it together. New games from Doom II to Magic Carpet use local-area networks and/or modem-to-modem connections to let you square off against the guy in the next cubicle or your friend across the country.

Although networked games have been around in one form or another since the text-based games that ran on mainframes in the '60s and '70s, it wasn't until the appearance of Velocity's breakthrough Spectre a few years ago that they began to penetrate the mainstream.

Then id Software included a network-play option in its shareware release of the 3-D action hit Doom, and network play became the new must-have gaming feature, not to mention the ultimate electronic thrill. Big companies that had never thought much about computer games in the workplace suddenly found themselves scrambling to create "No Doom" policies to keep Hell-addicted employees working instead of playing—and to keep their corporate nets from crashing. Legions of Doomers began joining groups such as the Doom Modem League looking for like-minded players who wanted more human opposition.

Why?

Because playing against a human is tougher and more satisfying than facing off against a PC. No artificial intelligence, however sophisticated, can hope to compete with the cunning and unpredictability of a human mind. Even more important, playing against the computer leaves out the emotional element. The machine just doesn't care if you laugh at the bloody remnants of its digital avatar, whereas your buddy will hate you for it.

Unfortunately, this network stuff isn't for computer newbies. Unless you're lucky enough to work in an office where management is foolish enough to give you a multimedia PC with a hard drive and a network connection, be prepared to sweat a little to get things set up (see "Happiness Is a Home Network," on page 47).

Once you've got the connections down, it's time to play. Fortunately, your choices of real-time, multiplayer, networked games are expanding rapidly. To experience the kind of in-your-face, balls-to-the-wall, cybermutoid experience that only a multiplayer contest can deliver, check out such games as Doom and Doom II, Descent, Heretic, Magic Carpet, Warcraft, Spectre VR, Falcon 3.0, Tank Commander, Fighter Wing, Rise of the Triad, Corridor 7, Wing Commander Armada, or Battledrome—with more on the way. It's the most fun you can have sitting at your computer.

By Vox Day

Doom and Beyond

Doom and Doom II are still the quintessential net games, and sharing violent evenings in Hell remains a favorite way for gamers to spend quality time together.

Network Doom offers two modes: Cooperative and Deathmatch. In Cooperative mode, you and your buddies work together to get through each level. Yawnnnn. Deathmatch is where it's at, especially Deathmatch 2.0 in Doom II. In this version, weapons, ammo, and health are available to all players, even if an opponent has already picked them up. In the original Doom, the goods disappeared forever if one of your opponents grabbed them first. The new approach evens the playing field and keeps one player from taking over too quickly.

Network Doom also lets you send "chat" messages to the other players in the middle of the game. You can even set up "chat macros," or key combinations, to send preset messages quickly. Try niceties like "You're going down!" or "Eat Plasma!"

When Deathmatch begins you and your opponents are located in different areas of the level. Just remember to watch your back; you can't see each other on the automap, so you never know if someone is sneaking up on you. To start the game, simply agree on how many "frags," or opponent kills, it takes to win. Then it's off to Hell!

Outta my way!

These guys are tough, but your buddy's got a BFG 9000.

Fun as it is, Doom is only the beginning of network excitement. If Doom ever made you feel like you were wearing blinders, try Descent's excellent expansion of the 3-D action concept into a full 360 degrees of movement. If running through the halls of Wolfenstein-3D made you queasy, wait until Descent sends your flyer spinning down through the mine shafts of Pluto. The ability to flip around upside-down means that you can get more hopelessly lost than you'd believe possible.

Nice explosion. Was it someone you knew?

Wrap your friends in flaming slag in Descent.

While the guardian robots don't exactly inspire the heart-stopping excitement of Doom's Hell Barons or Cyberdemons, their heavy loads of lasers and concussion missiles help keep things interesting. Network Descent is designed to have you racing down tunnels while trying to blow your human opponent into dust, but you can always refrain from killing each other and work cooperatively. Better yet, Descent is available in a fully networkable shareware version that's definitely worth digging up on an online service such as CompuServe or America Online or on a local BBS. (Look for a full review of the commercial version of Descent in an upcoming issue.)

Descent isn't the only piece of Doom-like shareware worth downloading. Heretic—developed for Doom-maker id Software by Raven Software, using an improved Doom II engine—doesn't look like much at first. The colors seem too bright, the weapons too puny, and the monsters too weak—especially compared with the game's illustrious forebears.

He'll never know what hit him.

The crossbow makes short work of the opposition in Heretic.

But when Heretic goes multiplayer, it actually outshines its predecessors. The absence of rapid-fire weapons among the monsters makes single-player adventuring a bit too easy, but that same limitation means that an overwhelmed Deathmatch player can dare to run away into unexplored areas without immediately getting blown to bits by machine guns. There are tactical bonus-

es, too: The ability to look up and down lets good stalkers take advantage of the plentiful parapets and ledges to ambush unwary wizards, and flying with the Wings of Wrath lets you deal instant death from above. Plus, the unearthly chanting of the Disciples of D'Sparil is the coolest sound effect you've ever heard in a game. If you're going to play only one networked game, Heretic is a good choice.

Something Different

If you want something a little different, though, grab some rug. Magic Carpet, probably the year's most beautiful game, supports network play for as many as eight players. Magic Carpet is one of a select group of truly innovative titles, as developer Bullfrog Productions melded an unusual Aladdinesque setting with an effective magic-based means of combat. Although not as viscerally gripping as some of the other net games, it's a lot of fun to watch your dominions grow beneath you, then cruise out and burn your opponents to a crisp. Just remember that these are human wizards you're facing now, not computer intelligences. Just backing up while tossing fireballs might work in the single-player game, but it'll get your butt toasted against an experienced human wizard. One more thing: Keep in mind that because the game plays off CD-ROM, you'll need multiple copies, plus a double-speed CD-ROM drive in each machine.

Meanwhile, fantasy lovers are still waiting for Strategic Studies Group to come out with a real-time, networked version of its classic strategy game Warlords. The upcoming Warlords 3, due out this winter, is likely to support only turn-based network play. But don't despair. Warcraft: Orcs and Humans has arrived from Blizzard Entertainment. This admirable strategy game supports two players, and although it's a fantasy game, Warcraft makes realistic economics an integral part of the martial equation. (It's hard to feed your troops if your opponent keeps burning down the farms.)

Falcon 3.0 remains the top gun of network flight sims.

Play alone or with a team in Spectre VR.

For networked strategists who don't want to take turns, Warcraft is definitely today's premier game.

You'll need all the Mana you can scrounge in Magic Carpet.

Strategy gamers can give Warcraft: Orcs and Humans a go via modem or network.

The Classics

Spectre and Spectre VR from Velocity are *the* classic net games. Although they're simple compared with the latest visual extravaganzas, they don't take up much space on the old hard drive, and they're still a ripping good time. As many as eight players can go after each other in futuristic tanks on a cyber-landscape of green cylinders and red cubes. Velocity has just released an upgraded Spectre VR that ships in a two-player package and includes shaded, more detailed graphics.

Flight sim fans don't have to fly alone, either. Among realistic air-battle games, Spectrum HoloByte's Falcon 3.0 has been top gun since it debuted early in 1992. As many as six players can take to the skies for aerial maneuvers and high-tech dogfighting either with or against each other. (The much-anticipated Falcon 4.0, which should also support net play—but with greatly improved graphics—is due out by the end of the year.)

By the time you read this, dogfight junkies will have another choice. Merit Studios' Russian-developed Fighter Wing flight simulator promises better graphics than the current Falcon, as well as support for as many as 16 pilots simultaneously. The game is designed with begin-

PC Games	Max Number of Players	Network Protocol	Modem Support?	Rating
Heretic	4	IPX	Yes	★★★★★
Rise of the Triad	11	IPX	Yes	★★★
Descent	8	IPX	Yes	★★★★½
Doom/Doom II	4	IPX	Yes	★★★★★
Corridor 7	12	IPX	Yes	★
Warcraft: Orcs and Humans	2	IPX	Yes	★★★★
Metaltech: Battledrome	2	IPX	Yes	★★½
Wing Commander Armada	6	IPX	Yes	★★½
Falcon 3.0	6	IPX	Yes	★★★★
Magic Carpet	8	NetBios	No	★★★★
Spectre VR	8	IPX, NetBios	No	★★★½
Mac Games				
Marathon	8	AppleTalk	No	★★★★
F/A-18 Hornet	4	AppleTalk	No	★★★½
Spectre VR	8	AppleTalk	No	★★★
Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	2	AppleTalk	No	★★★★

ners in mind, playing more like an arcade game than a true flight simulator. Players can compete head-to-head or choose to cooperate in missions against computerized opponents.

Meanwhile, flight-sim powerhouse Domark's new Tank Commander will support net play when it ships this spring. The preview version of this blow-your-buddy-into-wreckage tank simulator was fun in single-player mode, and it should be even better on a network against human opponents.

Tank Commander promises lots of blast-and-burn action.

Fighter Wing has just entered the multiplayer flight sim arena.

More of Nothing

Unfortunately, not every game that you can play over a wire is worth the effort. Some games are so lame that even a flesh-and-blood opponent can't make them fun.

Take Rise of the Triad. This first-person Doom-style shooter takes good advantage of network features and scores bonus points for its innovative broadcasting feature: If you've got a microphone attached to your sound card, you can sample any invective you'd like to direct at your opponent and deliver it at full volume—"Time to die!" Rise of the Triad also has lots of nifty little "Comm-Bat" (multiplayer) game variants, such as Tag and Capture the Triad, and supports as many as 11 players. But it requires a dedicated network server. More important, the game looks ugly and sounds terrible, which may be why you have to type ROTT at the DOS prompt to start a new game.

Rise of the Triad has some interesting multiplayer options.

Even so, Rise of the Triad is a lot better than Capstone's Corridor 7. Based on the Wolfenstein-3D engine, Corridor 7 only goes to show that it takes more than a good 3-D engine to make a great game. Corridor 7 "features" pixelated graphics, muddy sound, and simple level designs. Even though the game supports 12 players at once—three times as many as Doom II—most people would rather take turns playing a space marine in Hell.

Corridor 7 just doesn't cut it these days.

Looking Ahead

As the popularity of multiplayer games continues to rise, look for a new flood of networked titles. The current versions of Origin's Wing Commander Armada and Metaltech: Battledrome from Dynamix may not be your best multiplayer bets, but both games hold great promise for the future.

Wing Commander Armada's wingmen and enemies are abysmally stupid and easy to defeat, which quickly turns every conflict into a boring one-on-one dogfight against your human opponents. Hopefully, the game's artificial intelligence will get smarter by the next version.

Similarly, the gladiatorial Mech arena of

Multiple Macs

Macs have networks, too. Heck, PCs can only dream of a time when they'll be as easy to hook together as Macs have been for years. Still, the selection of network-capable Mac games is relatively slim. If you live or work with a Mac network, give some careful consideration to Marathon, F/A-18 Hornet, Spectre VR, or Chuck Yeager's Air Combat.

Spectre VR is just as much fun on the Mac as it is on the PC, especially when you're up against other human opponents screaming over the speakerphones. Guide your cybertank around a 3-D cyberspace arena and just blow the guys away on the other teams.

Any Mac lover who's ever lusted after Doom should grab a look at Marathon (see review, page 73). This Doom-with-a-real-plot action/adventure game has you killing off bug-like aliens at a furious clip. Play with a couple friends and you can watch each other's backs while you explore—or just use them as more targets.

If you'd rather take off in something a little closer to home, F/A-18 Hornet is a surefire winner with the flight-sim set. Pick up some buddies and fly as a unit against the computerized enemy, or take a training flight with pass or die as the only grades.

For a little diversity in your network flight-sim action, give Chuck Yeager's Air Combat a fly. Chuck supports only a pair of players, but there's nothing like taking a P-51 against a FW-190A or, better yet, putting a superior pilot in an inferior plane to help even the odds.

—Christopher Lindquist

Happiness Is A Home Network

By far, the best way to play network games is on a network that someone else maintains. That's not always possible; even if you have access to an appropriate net at work, the boss may have you cleaning out your cube if he catches you trying to install Doom on the company's computers.

If you can't play at work, how about a home network? Don't laugh: More and more people have multiple computers these days, and many of these machines are now connected to each other.

Unfortunately, one of the few things more humiliating than being creamed by your Doom opponent is trying to get a home network up and running. But if you're lucky enough to have more than one computer in the house that's capable of running the latest games, it may be worth picking up some Ethernet cards, cabling, and networking software.

If you're trying to connect only a pair of systems, you're in luck: Most networkable games also support modem-to-modem links, and you usually don't need multiple phone lines to do it. Simply get a null-modem cable at the local computer store, attach it to a serial port on each PC, and tell the game you want to play a null-modem game. You're on!

If you just happen to have three or more reasonably up-to-date PCs kicking around the house, you'll have to spend a little more time and money. Most of today's network games require a network protocol called IPX, a common language that lets the computers send and receive messages. Unfortunately, IPX is owned by network software developer Novell, so most of the super-simple, plug-and-go networks out there won't support these games.

Luckily, Novell's Personal Netware is a fairly inexpensive way to create a home gaming network. You can pick up single-user copies of the software for less than $100 apiece. You'll also need a network interface card for each computer—mail-order prices for Novell Netware-approved cards begin at around $40. Installing the network cards, cabling, and software can pose unforeseen hazards, however, so be prepared to make some tech support calls before you throw your first Heretic Deathmatch party. *—Christopher Lindquist and Vox Day*

Battledrome limits you to one-on-one action and mediocre graphics. But the game's "challenge board" setup has potential for good free-for-all fun in the future, with more than two players.

New tools will also help speed development of multiplayer games. Software developer Human Machine Interfaces recently released an inexpensive development library that helps game makers add network and modem play to their products; now big companies such as LucasArts have no excuse not to support network play in otherwise fantastic games like Dark Forces and TIE Fighter. And many small companies should be able to offer a variety of multiplayer options without breaking a sweat.

Even Microsoft is getting in on the network game wave. Microsoft Baseball for Windows, due out this season, is expected to support two-player, head-to-head action over a network in the future.

Finally, new ways to get together with other players are making local-area network connections look limited. For Doomers, id is offering a direct dial-in service called DWANGO that lets you go shotgun-to-shotgun with Doomheads from around the country. Look for it now in San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, Houston, and Dallas. Papyrus is creating a system that will let as many as 32 virtual drivers race the NASCAR circuit against each other; that should be running by August. And Domark is setting up a flight-sim system called Confirmed Kill, due out this fall, that should support up to 357 people at a time—so the electronic skies will be pretty crowded quite soon. I wonder who gets to play air traffic controller?

Battledrome took a good first stab at multiplayer, but it still needs work...

...as does Wing Commander Armada.

Network Toolbox

Chuck Yeager's Air Combat for the Mac; Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; Mac, $49.95

Corridor 7; Capstone; 800-468-7226; DOS CD, street price $25

Descent; Interplay; 800-969-4263; DOS, $39.95

Doom, Doom II, and **Heretic;** GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; DOS/DOS CD, street price $40-$50

Falcon 3.0; Spectrum HoloByte; 800-695-4263; DOS, $54.95

F/A-18 Hornet; Graphic Simulations; 800-255-6227; Mac, $49

Fighter Wing; Merit; 800-238-4277; DOS/DOS CD, $69.95

Magic Carpet; Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD, $59.95

Marathon; Bungie Software; 312-563-6200; Mac, street price $39-$49

Metaltech: Battledrome; Dynamix; 800-757-7707; DOS/DOS CD, street price $49-$59

Rise of the Triad; Apogee Software; 800-426-3123; DOS, $29.95; DOS CD, $34.95

Spectre VR; Velocity; 800-856-2489; DOS/Mac, $49.95

Tank Commander; Domark; 800-695-4263; DOS, $54.95

Warcraft: Orcs and Humans; Blizzard Entertainment; 800-545-7677; DOS/DOS CD, street price $45

Wing Commander Armada; Origin; 800-245-4525; DOS, $59.95

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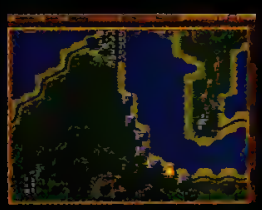

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Just do it: Better

Get off your duff and get into the game with help from computer coaches.

Mountain Biking from Media Mosaic uses animation, narration, and text to demonstrate moves like the rear lean.

Karch Kiraly and Karolyn Kirby rise to the occasion in ESPN Let's Play Volleyball.

Worried that your backside is melding with the Naugahyde on your La-Z-Boy? Afraid that you're contracting repetitive motion disorder from clicking past TV evangelists and talk show hosts? Concerned that your head is fusing with the PC monitor due to an overdose of TIE Fighter? Well, it's time to wean yourself of your mouse-potato ways.

Fortunately, your PC isn't just part of the problem—it can also be part of the solution. Whatever your age or sporting inclination, there's an interactive CD-ROM that can teach you how to "just do it" better than if you headed out on your own. You'll get a workout even if you never leave the keyboard.

Warren Miller brings his dry wit and knowledge of skiing history to Warren Miller's Ski World.

Warm Up

If you've looked up from the screen lately, you may have noticed that it's already spring, and summer's 'round the corner. You know, those lovely days when the sun shines, the birds chirp, and you're plunging down a muddy 45-degree slope at 40 miles per hour on a monster made of alloy and steel.

Media Mosaic's Mountain Biking CD-ROM is just what you need to prepare for this wild ride. The graceful title has an artful—and earthy—interface that clearly lays out the well-organized disc's various sections.

You'll spend most of your time in the Trail Riding section, which contains the bulk of the title's video and animated instruction. However, a strong, well-narrated introduction, which includes slide shows and videos, covers the philosophy of the sport, equipment, and basics of riding. You'll also want to

By Bill Meyer

PHOTOGRAPH BY YELLOW DOG PRODUCTIONS/IMA

check out the Mountain Bike section, which will get you up to speed on your bike's anatomy.

Bumps include sluggish performance and subtle ads for shoes and apparel from Nike. Overall, though, Mountain Biking's ambitious content and fine execution make it one of the best how-to-sports titles. Later this summer, Media Mosaic plans to add instructional titles on kayaking and mountain climbing.

Coach K passes on great information to players and coaches.

If conquering mountains isn't your thing, you could hit the high seas instead with Swfte's Interactive Sailing. Unfortunately, this sailing-instruction program is anything but smooth sailing. The disc's clunky interface sinks the fresh and interesting concept. Its disappointing Technique Section features too-short instructional videos that look like they came from a cheaply made video tape. And narration is too sparse and vague to define the most essential sailing concepts.

A weak techniqua section and clunky interfaca sinks Interactiva Sailing.

More experienced sailors will enjoy Interactive Sailing's authentic simulator. You choose actual course configurations and try to tack past other boats to the finish line. You monitor wind conditions, keep an eye on other boats, watch the clock, and order your crew to adjust the sails accordingly. This part could actually teach you some sailing skills.

Play To Win

Your PC can also help improve your performance in competitive and team sports. Intellimedia is pretty much the only game in town for interactive instruction on such popular sports as basketball, volleyball, soccer, golf, and tennis. Intellimedia's trademark is hands-on video instruction from celebrity athletes and coaches—the likes of tennis veteran Tracy Austin, PGA Tour pro Tom Kite, volleyball star Karch Kiraly, shortstop Ozzie Smith, and Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski.

Hoopsters should check out ESPN Winning Hoops with Coach K, hosted by Krzyzewski. The dual-disc package helps coaches and advanced players fine-tune their performance. You can watch a complete set of videos sequentially or click on a menu selection, such as "Elbow" or "Hands," to view a video on that specific topic. This flexibility lets you concentrate on the areas where you need work, such as Ball Handling, Rebounding, Offense, or Defense.

The disc's glossary is an added bonus. Only slightly grainy video keeps Winning Hoops with Coach K from achieving an undefeated season.

Baseball players can get overall help from ESPN Let's Play Baseball or take practice cuts with ESPN Baseball: Hitting (see "Multimaniac: How My PC Made Me a Swinger," October 1994, page 70). In Let's Play Baseball, the Wizard of Oz (Cardinals shortstop Ozzie Smith) covers all the bases—hitting, pitching, catching, outfield and infield play, and baserunning.

In the hitting disc, Ron Fraser, coaching great and former NCAA champion, concentrates on helping you improve your swing with instruction, drills, and an Ask the Coach section. A third baseball-instruction title, ESPN Total Baseball, featuring Tommy

Coaching On the Wire

CD-ROM isn't the only way to work on your game; your modem can take you to some excellent places to find out about athletic fun. You can chat with other enthusiasts, post messages asking for advice, download files, and even buy equipment.

America Online sports all sorts of activity-related forums. Cyclists have two choices: *Bicycling* magazine and Bikenet each have forums that will intrigue the two-wheeler set. Backpackers, boaters, and scuba divers will also find areas particular to their interests, and Outdoor Adventure Online serves as an excellent omnibus area. Choose keyword: sports, then click on the Sports Clubs icon; if you're after skiing-related areas, select keyword: ski instead. (Most of the rest of AOL's Sports area is for couch-potato fans.)

CompuServe offers almost as much diversity for sporting participants. Sailors and tennis players can find specific forums for their avocations; the Outdoor Activities Forum, Outdoors Library, and Great Outdoors Forum cover a lot of ground; and the overall Sports Forum doesn't discriminate against doers, either. Use the Find command to search "Sports."

In Delphi, type a "g" at the main menu command prompt; that drops you into Groups and Clubs. Golfers, gymnasts, and sailors will find forums there, but everyone else will want to select Custom Forums, then Sports. That connects you to several specific forums; the omnibus Adventure and Recreational Sports forum should cover anything you don't see right off.

Prodigy's offerings are tricky to find; clicking on Sports or using Jump to go there will get you lots of chat about the weekend's TV games. Try Jump: Sports Play BB instead. That'll take you to the Sports Play bulletin board, where you can find resources about all manner of recreation, up to—and including—paintball.

For unlimited fun, though, check out the Internet's World Wide Web. A comprehensive Web site is the home page from *Outside* magazine and Starwave, Outside Online. The service will rely primarily on archives and current reporting from *Outside*, while Starwave—one of many companies backed by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen—will add in time-sensitive information such as weather and event reporting. Get there by typing http://www.starwave.com/Outside.

For the Web addresses of other sports-related sites, check into a list site like the Yahoo home page at http://akebono.stanford.edu. You'll find sports topics by clicking on Entertainment, then Sports. And don't forget, there are more Usenet newsgroups under the alt.sports.* and rec.sports.* banner than you'll ever have time to visit. —*Donald St. John*

Slopestyle mixes jamming footage and tunes with an exciting new interface.

Lasorda, comes out this spring, along with ESPN Total Football, starring Joe Theismann.

In ESPN Let's Play Beach Volleyball, Intellimedia once again employs the game's best: Karch Kiraly, a two-time Olympic gold-medalist and current two-man pro beach champion, and Karolyn Kirby, star of the pro women's beach circuit. The top-flight talent, step-by-step explanations, drills, and standardized interface make this disc a rewarding and valuable primer for both beach and gym players. But some advanced moves, such as body positioning and follow-through during spikes, aren't explained as well as they are demonstrated. Kirby never stumbles during a dig or set, but she trips up occasionally on audio deliveries.

Golfers can turn to Tom Kite for help with their game. His ESPN Golf Lower Your Score With Tom Kite titles, The Full Swing and Putting, and ESPN Golf Shot Making, are both excellent. Not only is Kite a great player, he's also an engaging teacher. Each dual-disc set takes the time to thoroughly cover specific aspects of the game, instead of trying to cover the entire sport. Kite has plenty of room to illustrate proper stance, balance, rotation, and swing, along with reciting personal anecdotes and critiques of other pros. Surprisingly, Kite doesn't just advocate his own techniques; he offers plenty of alternatives, such as unorthodox grip styles and stances. Finally, sports psychologist Dr. Bob Rotella delivers pointers on the mental side of the game.

Tom Kite plays and teaches like the pro he is in a pair of golf titles.

With soccer, Intellimedia returns to the two-tiered approach: ESPN Let's Play Soccer offers a general introduction to the sport, while ESPN Interactive Soccer: Skills & Strategies handles more advanced instruction. Both titles feature World Cup midfielder John Harkes and U.S. National Team member Mia Hamm, while U.S. national goalkeeper Tony Meola adds his expertise in Skills & Strategies. Harkes and Hamm clearly know what they're doing, but sometimes—unlike Meola—they don't have enough personality to hold your attention. Skills & Strategies also blunders with a lame mouse-controlled soccer game.

Finally, for the net-set, there's ESPN Let's Play Tennis With Tracy Austin, which delivers basic instruction on the serve, volley, backhand, and strategy. In July, Intellimedia's golf and tennis titles will get competition from Romboy's Golfer's Encyclopedia and Tennis Smarts from Sport Smarts.

Everything is covered, even the gear, in ESPN Interactive Soccer: Skills & Strategies.

On the Slopes

Although the snow's just about melted, skiing and snowboarding titles just keep coming.

Snowboarders should check out Slopestyle: An Interactive Learning Cube, the 3DO title from L3 Interactive (a Windows version will ship in May). A hot mix of style and substance makes it the coolest winter sport title around. Instead of boring lectures, Slopestyle blends serious instruction with exciting boarding footage and adrenaline-pumping tunes.

Skiers will want to look at Warren Miller's Ski World. Renowned ski-film-maker Miller breaks his training videos into adequate instructions for beginners and intermediates, but black-diamond lovers will get short changed.

Both beginners and experts will take a tumble with the Skier's Encyclopedia from Romboy. Vague, undirected videos blaze by too quickly to deliver much value—leaving too much room for shameless advertising for Olin skis.

Intellimedia's Let's Go Skiing with Picabo Street, A.J. Kitt, and Holly Flanders isn't as stylish or hip as Warren Miller's Ski World or Slopestyle, but its Olympic and World Cup champion teachers take a more scientific approach to skiing. More advanced snowbunnies should look for the upcoming ESPN Mastering the Mountain: Interactive Skiing and Snowboarding in the fall.

The Sporting Goods Store

ESPN Total Basaball (Win CD/Mac CD)
ESPN Basaball: Hitting (Win CD/3DO)
ESPN Total Football (Win CD/Mac CD)
ESPN Golf Lower Your Score With Tom Kita: Tha Full Swing and Putting (Win CD/Mac CD)
ESPN Lower Your Scora With Tom Kita: Shot Making (Win CD/Mac CD/3DO)
ESPN Interactiva Soccer: Skills & Stratagies (Win CD/Mac CD)
ESPN Mastering tha Mountain: Interactiva Skiing and Snowboarding (Win CD/Mac CD)
ESPN Winning Noops with Coach K (Win CD/Mac CD)
(Intellimedia; 800-269-2101; $59.95 each)

ESPN Lat's Go Skiing (Win CD/Mac CD/3DO)
ESPN Lat's Play Basaball (Win CD)
ESPN Let's Play Beach Vollayball (Win CD/3DO)
ESPN Let's Play Soccer (Win CD/Mac CD/3DO)
ESPN Let's Play Tannis With Tracy Austin (Win CD/Mac CD/3DO)
(Intellimedia; 800-269-2101; $39.95 each)
Intaractiva Sailing (Swfte; 800-237-9383; DOS/Win CD, $69.95)
Mountain Biking (Media Mosaic; 800-972-3766; Win CD/Mac CD, $59.95)
Skiar's Encyclopadia (Romboy; 800-238-6754; Win CD/Mac CD, $39.95)
Slopestyla (L3 Intaractiva; 310-264-4188; 3DO/Win CD, $44.95)
Warren Miller's Ski World (Multicom Publishing; 800-850-7272; Win CD/Mac CD, $49.95)

Star Trek: The Next Generation

"A Final

Trekkers rejoice! Maybe all you can get are reruns of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* on TV, but your PC has the new stuff.

Star Trek: The Next Generation "A Final Unity" is an animated adventure game featuring the voices of your favorite *TNG* stars, including Brent Spiner, Jonathan Frakes, and Patrick Stewart. In this expansive interactive episode, the famed crew and their illustrious starship attempt to unravel yet another universe-threatening mystery. Best of all, this DOS-based CD-ROM should be launching its ongoing mission on store shelves right about now.

Here's your chance to seek out new thrills and new excitement, to boldly go where no game has taken you before.

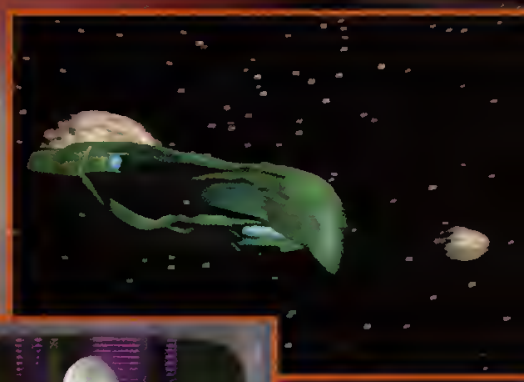
Not all *Trek* fans are heavy adventure gamers, so developer Spectrum HoloByte keeps things flexible: Three difficulty settings make the game appropriate for anyone from a rank beginner to an experienced pro. Gaming novices can play on the easiest level and receive constant advice from crew members about what to do next without having to worry about who to bring on Away Teams. Beginners can also assign characters to handle such chores as navigation and tactical operations, making it easier to concentrate on the strategic decisions.

Advanced gamers can turn off all the advice, pick their own Away Teams, and run the entire *Enterprise* on their own—although Worf or Geordi will still lend a hand if you ask. Either way, you get dozens of planets and locations to explore, scores of aliens to interact with, and more than a few opportunities to use the photon torpedoes.

It's all tied together with more than 10,000 lines of dialog, authentic *Trek* sounds, and a plot that begins with a small ship fleeing through the Neutral Zone and carries you far beyond Federation space as you follow a mystery that unfolds around an ancient and highly advanced civilization. Take our exclusive Guided Tour for an inside look at this latest outer space adventure. (Spectrum HoloByte; 800-695-4263; DOS CD, street price $64.95-$69.95)

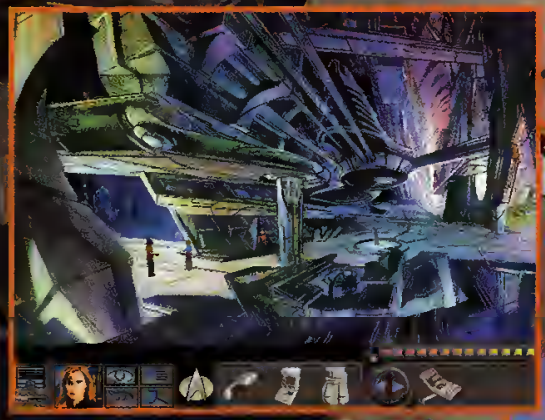
By Christopher Lindquist

Unity"



The Romulans are on the move. The question is, why?

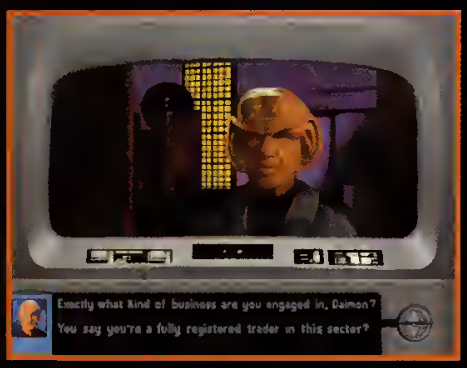
The Garidians are not happy with your decision to get involved with their "internal affairs."



The Gatekeeper will let you through—if you answer his questions correctly.

The crew of the *Enterprise* is at your command. Each officer has particular skills that you must learn to use at the proper times.

The character voices are the real McCoy, but the actors themselves appear courtesy of computer animation.



Ferengi may not be the most noble beings in the Universe, but they often possess key information.

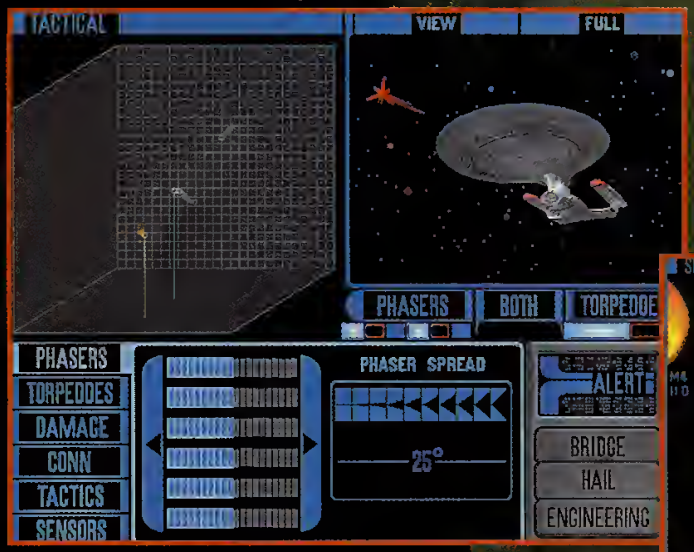
You never know what you might find in a desert canyon—maybe even the entrance to an underground complex.

Judicious use of phasers can yield hidden clues. But just blasting everything merely cruates an unsightly mess.

When all else fails—or is failing—it's time to head back to the Federation Starbase for some much-needed repair and refueling.

Engineering keeps the ship's heart beating. Perform repairs and assign power levels to various functions, or let Geordi handle it all.

On the higher skill levels, you must choose your own Away Teams. Pick carefully to make sure you have the right skills available for the job at hand. While Worf is handy with a phaser, Crusher might be better suited for any medical emurgencies.



Sometimes, even the best negotiators are forced to let their weapons do the talking.

Use the starship's astrogation system to plot your course to one of the hundreds of locations in the game. Of course, only a few places will help you win.

These are amazing creatures indeed, but the person you need to find isn't here.

Computer panels can hold valuable information. Getting to that data is Mr. Data's specialty.

This place is *huge*. To move quickly from one area to another, simply hold down the Shift key while walking.

Sometimes it pays to take things slowly. Blundering ahead could give you quite a shock.

Stop the probe before it shuts off life support. Just remember, direct force isn't always the answer.

Search everywhere, leaving nothing unturned.

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Business is Business

Zeppelin isn't "the latest and greatest" game, but MicroProse could still make a sizable chunk of change from it.

The business of computer gaming is, well, a business. But protecting the bottom line means that low-quality products without much reason to exist—except to boost company coffers—sometimes appear on store shelves.

Zeppelin, a new strategy/simulation from MicroProse (see review on page 66), is a case in point. According to knowledgeable sources at the company, this "oddball" product hit store shelves because MicroProse "essentially got it for free." Sources said MicroProse incurred few costs beyond marketing and distribution, paying essentially nothing for design—usually the most expensive part of game development.

In essence, Zeppelin was a hand-me-down. The business-strategy game was originally released by Kingsoft in Germany and then was licensed by MicroProse's United Kingdom division. When the U.S. office licensed the game, they essentially took it as is from the Brits.

"We had zero input into the game design," a source at MicroProse said. "It's like buying a product from some company that went out of business and trying to get more mileage out of it."

MicroProse seems to recognize that Zeppelin does not measure up to past efforts. "This is a niche product for us," the source explained, "not a big thing we put a whole lot of effort into."

In the company's defense, one source said MicroProse deliberately priced the product low and didn't promote it as "the latest and the greatest."

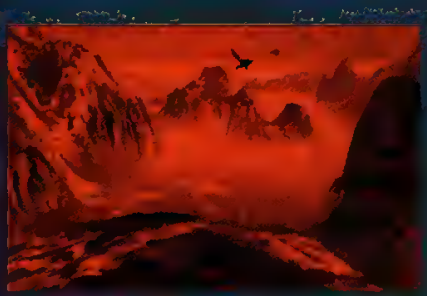
MicroProse said it doesn't expect the game to be a big seller, but even if it sells the expected 30,000 units, the game could gross nearly $1 million. Based on estimated industry standards, that could drop some $400,000 into MicroProse's lap. —*David Israels*

Scouting Report

Game News You Can Use

If you were lucky enough to find the slick Japanese import Gadget from Synergy Interactive, you'll want to check out the distributor's latest adventure puzzle game. **Horror Tour** applies the same dynamic 3-D graphic style to a medieval world. You'll explore a crumbling castle and meet horrid witches, deadly demons, horned beasts, and lovely temptresses. Expect it this summer for Mac and Windows CD-ROM.

Doom maker id Software has reportedly created a multiplayer Internet protocol that will form the basis for multiplayer action in **Quake**, the much-anticipated successor to Doom II. The company has reportedly proposed that the protocol be used by other game makers as a standard way to create multiplayer games that run on the Internet.



Battle terrifying demons, witches, and beasts in Synergy Interactive's Horror Tour.

Interplay Productions, makers of Descent, Cyberia, and the immortal Boogerman, is the latest game company to hop onto the World Wide Web. The company's home page at http://www.interplay.com will feature downloadable demos, shareware, and game patches, among other things.

American Laser Games is trying to stretch its market with a new series of games for girls. The new line will be called Games for Her, with the first CD-ROM title, **Madison High**, due for the PC in August. Female gamers can relive a first date, high school parties, and, of course, class. Look for it on Mac and 3DO in September and October, respectively. American Laser Games will also be shipping some titles more in line with the company's Mad Dog roots: **Mazer**, **Last Bounty Hunter**, and **Shoot Out at Old Tucson** are all due this fall for 3DO.

Megamedia has released **Megapak Volume Two** on DOS and Windows CD-

Online Game Cheat Sites

Online services and the Internet store a wealth of hints, tips, and cheats for almost any game you'd want to play. Here's a list of hot sites for insider gaming information.

World Wide Web Pages

Myst
http://www.astro.washington.edu/ingram/myst/index.html

Doom and Doom II
DoomGate (also includes Heretic and Descent tips)
http://doomgate.cs.buffalo.edu/index-html.html

The Official DOOM FAQ
http://venom.st.hmc.edu/~tkelly/doomfaq/sect2.html

Welcome To DOOM!
http://www.cs.indiana.edu/games/doom/doom-home.html

Various Games
http://hyperarchive.lcs.mit.edu/HyperArchive/Abstracts/game/com/

http://akebono.stanford.edu/yahoo/Entertainment/Games/

http://wclrs.bham.ac.uk/GamesDomain/games.html

Internet FTP Sites

Game FAQs
ftp://wcl-l.bham.ac.uk/pub/djh/faqs/

MS-DOS games
ftp://ftp.funet.fi/pub/msdos/games/solutions

Usenet Newsgroups

Arcade-style games
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.action

Adventure games
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.adventure

Flight simulators
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.flight-sim

Miscellaneous games
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.misc

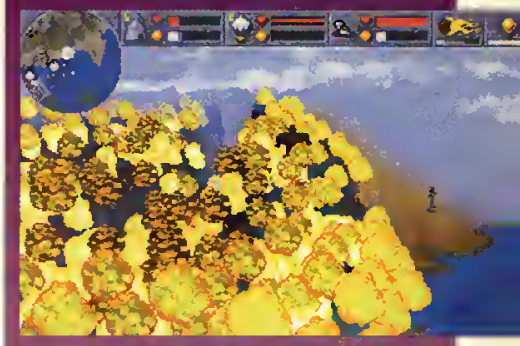
Strategy games
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.strategic

Role-playing games
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.rpg

America Online
America Online users can Keyword to "pcgames" to find info on just about any game on the market. Ask questions, dig up patches, and scrounge cheat files.

CompuServe
The same kind of information is available on CompuServe by typing "go gamers." If action games like Doom II and Heretic are your thing, save some time and just type "go action."

Prodigy
Get your game cheats and related info on Prodigy by Jumping to "games."



Fly higher in Magic Carpet with these handy cheats.

Magic Carpet Cheats

Finding the free-scrolling worlds of Magic Carpet a bit hard to handle? These crafty techniques will boost your odds. To use the cheats, type the "i" key while playing. A cursor will appear next to the world map. Type "ratty" and hit the Enter key. At that point, the following key combinations should work like magic!

Alt+F1	Get all the spells
Alt+F2	Increase your Mana supply
Alt+F3	Destroy all other players
Alt+F4	Bring down all the castles
Alt+F5	Pop competing balloons
Alt+F6	Heal yourself
Alt+F7	Genocide: Kills every living creature
Shift+C	Restore current Level

ROM. Like the original Megapak, you'll find a variety of games and multimedia titles, including Return to Ringworld from Time Warner, Jurassic Park by Ocean, Jutland by Software Sorcery, Microcosm from Psygnosis, Bodyworks Voyager by Software Marketing Group, and Shadowlands from Domark, among others. As a bonus, Megamedia throws in the CompuServe Starter CD, upping the total to 11 discs.

If you are one of those Mac users who feels terribly neglected by game makers, Blizzard Entertainment hopes to ease your pain with a Mac version of its popular strategy game, **Warcraft: Orcs and Humans,** in which you do battle as the Human or Orc race using a deadly arsenal of weaponry and magic. Expect it this fall for approximately $45.

Despite its roots in the aging CD-i platform, **Philips Media Games** now says that PC CD-ROM games have become its top-sellers. But the company continues to support CD-i, with more than a few games expected over the next few months. Look for a title developed in conjunction with Hollywood effects artists Art Greenberg and Associates, the folks behind those "Bogart-meets-Paula-Abdul" Diet Coke commercials, plus a cartridge game from Motown Interactive featuring music from rap stars such as Queen Latifah.

Look for games from Sony Imagesoft based on the comic superhero Spawn.

Spawn, the Faustian comic book superhero/defender of the innocent created by Todd McFarlane, will emerge from the depths of the city to appear in a new series of CD-ROM games from Sony Imagesoft. A reincarnation of Army Lieutenant Al Simmons, Spawn will use his titanic powers to defeat evil on the Mac, and PC this fall.

Now that there are actually some quality titles for the 3DO, you may be interested in some new hardware for the system. Naki is shipping the **Naki Wireless Controllers for 3DO.** With these new pads, you won't be tied to the machine while playing your favorite 3DO games.

Heretic

By Bill Meyer

Gargoyles are the least of your worries.

It's almost embarrassing to admit, but I like Heretic, id Software's new fantasy Doom-style shooter that replaces advanced weaponry and distant moon bases with powerful spells and ancient castles.

The goal, as always, is to negotiate a set of mazes en route to a final conflict with evil incarnate. Like the original Doom, Heretic has three parts—City of the Damned, Hell's Maw, and the Dome of D'Sparil—with about eight stops in each location. Mucking around in Heretic might give Doom veterans a fit of deja vu: The new game uses a different color palette and adds lots of water, but some of the cavernous halls and stairways look like they were pulled right out of Doom's blueprints.

An array of new ghouls awaits you in Heretic.

Spells or shotguns, the name of the game remains stopping Hell's minions. To do so, you have to navigate the mazes, find loads of keys, and muscle up enough firepower to destroy your nemesis. Don't try the Doom cheat codes, though, especially "iddqd." They either won't work at all, or—worse—they will work, but in unexpected ways.

Heretic
id Software
800-434-2637

Platform: DOS, DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM, VGA
Street Price: $40

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Doom-lovers can't go wrong with this sword-and-sorcery version. The creatures and levels aren't as interesting, but Heretic offers plenty of new ways to wreak havoc.

Heretic does take Doom's role-playing element a couple steps farther. Instead of just seven weapons, you get an inventory screen for nine additional Merlinesque spells and objects. For instance, Shadowspheres grant invisibility, vials of healing liquid return health, and Wings of Wrath let you fly for short distances. One spell even turns your enemy into a chicken.

On the downside, the creatures in Heretic are not as conceptually sound or graphically impressive as those in Doom. A big hulking guy who looks like the comic-book hero The Thing from The Fantastic Four, a giant helmeted skeleton head that blows tornadoes, and crustacean-like warriors make exciting additions. But the red-winged, fireball-hurling gargoyles are pretty lame. And some of the weapons—especially the medieval version of the plasma launcher—cover the screen with a pixelated blast when they hit anything at close range. Finally, although some areas mimic Doom, the mazes are smaller and less complicated—and not as filled with substances that toast your footsies.

Nonetheless, Heretic is still fun. You'll enjoy seeing how id took advantage of medieval clichés, such as replacing the Nightmare difficulty level with "The plague isth upon you," and scattering quivers of arrows instead of shotgun shells.

If you're not a Doom fan, Heretic probably won't change your mind about this kind of game. But the legions of Doom-crazed gamers looking for a new thrill will have a great time. And sword-and-sorcery fans may enjoy it even more than the original.

TIPS

• The cheats are different from Doom's, but you still use the same keys for shoot and scoot. Hit Shift for speed and an Arrow key plus Ctrl-Alt to strafe. • Just as in Doom, you can add some curve to your weapon's projectiles by sidestepping to the right or left and quickly moving back the other way while firing. • Equivalent to the shotgun in Doom, Heretic's bread-and-butter weapon is the crossbow. There are lots of quivers lying about, and a well-shot arrow can bring down almost anything. • Don't get seduced by the Dragon's Claw. It's as fast and furious as a chain gun, but ammo disappears quickly.

CHEATS

Type these commands while playing to gain those little extras we all love so much:

quicken: God mode
rambo: All weapons
skel: All keys
ravmap: Complete level map
kitty: No clipping—walk through walls
cockadoodledoo: A whole new way to play

Ravenloft: Stone Prophet

By Al Giovetti

Your desert encounters can yield critical information.

Fearsome creatures await your arrival.

Choose your friends to defeat your enemies.

The mummy lord Anhktepot stirs, and his wrath is once more upon the land. Yet there is more to fear than the undead pharaoh: Even darker forces are at work, and only you, with the aid of your counterparts, can unravel their plans. Thus begins Ravenloft: Stone Prophet, sequel to Strategic Simulations' popular Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession.

Developed by veteran role-playing firm DreamForge, Stone Prophet is set in the richly detailed desert of Har'Akir from TSR's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Ravenloft game world. Stone Prophet gives you a first-person view of this world, and you can import characters you created in Strahd's Possession into Stone Prophet, lending continuity to the game. Fans of the first Ravenloft will not be disappointed with this follow-up.

This time, the party of characters you control must escape from the Har'Akir desert prison by besting the mummy Anhktepot. Along the way, you'll explore a detailed world filled with magic spells, exotic races, and 24 living and undead creatures—some friendly, some not. Your characters start out the adventure at level 4 and can rise to level 20 by accumulating experience in battle and solving the game's treasure-hunt puzzles.

As in the previous Ravenloft, you can select both stepping and scrolling movement of the view window. For the first time, Stone Prophet also lets you print automaps and notes for later perusal, and it includes an easier-to-use spell system that suspends time during combat while you select spells.

The overall pace of Stone Prophet is slower and more cerebral than prior Ravenloft games. While incessant and mindless battles abound in Har'Akir, the game's action is surrounded by a solid, well-written plot that engages you through conversation. And conversations are lively, with more than 30 nonplayer characters that can join your party.

The improvements don't stop there. Realistic graphics give stone walls a gritty, hard look, while hieroglyphics and other clever details entertain the eye. You can retrieve dropped inventory items where they fall instead of having them simply disappear. Your possessions and clothing are "worn" on your character, with backpacks and key rings available to help you manage the massive number of inventory items.

Stone Prophet is a must-buy for the fans of AD&D first-person perspective games and role-playing game novices. This excellent all-around product delivers fresh sound and visuals, solid game play, and a compelling plot.

Ravenloft: Stone Prophet
Strategic Simulations
415-883-3000

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/33, 4MB RAM, VGA
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

A must-have for AD&D fans and beginning role players, with plot and conversation playing as important a role as hack-and-slash.

SPLIT

- Some locations that may be difficult to navigate in "step" mode can be easily bypassed in "scroll" mode.
- Talk to the blind seer with the Helm of Telepathy and return her sight with both of the eyes of Nefertiti. She will help you gain access to the obelisk.
- The Helm of Brilliance in the well will spare you from casting light spells.
- The Helm of True Seeing on the 2nd floor of the Temple of Set will help you find illusionary walls.
- Give the magic watering urn from the Temple of Set to the blind priest in the Temple of Harvest in return for the key to the lower levels.
- When in the lower levels of the Temple of Harvest, use air spores to breathe.
- Talk to the street urchin in the tent village, and he will give you a map to all the important locations in the game.

PREVIEW

Lost Eden

By John Sauer

Amazing creatures will join Adam on his quest.

Lost Eden
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card, mouse
List Price: $34.99

Is soaring above a land before time on the back of a talking Pterodactyl your idea of a good time? If so, you'll have a blast in Virgin Interactive's Lost Eden, a CD-ROM graphics adventure where man and dinosaur live side-by-side. Even more amazing, Lost Eden manages to create a highly entertaining story without gratuitous violence, sex, or graphic language.

Fans of Dune for the PC will feel right at home with Lost Eden; both were developed by French firm Cryo Ltd. and carry the same Euro-slick feel. Lost Eden's graphics resemble highly rendered fantasy paintings, and the animated sequences carry you away (if a tad slowly on a double-speed CD-ROM drive) with cinematic elegance. While the early version we saw didn't yet include music, the wonderful character voices—particularly the dinosaur language variations—lit up the game. Make a positive impression on a brontosaurus, and you'll know what I mean!

You play as Adam, a prince of the Citadel of Mo. You have taken up the mantel of the Architect, your great-grandfather, who built the Citadel of Mo and united man and dinosaur against the vicious Tyrans (read: Tyrannosaurus Rex). With the Flute of the Architect in hand, you must track down the lost legends of your family and reunite man and dinosaur by getting them to build citadels in many different lands.

Dinosaurs and man must learn to work together once again.

Each species of dinosaur and human has its own language, habits, and traditions. To win their friendship, you must present them with the proper gift. Generosity is a two-way street, and other characters give you gifts when you do favors for them. Each encounter works like a chapter in a book (with narrative from Eloi the Pterodactyl), leading to the next event.

Lost Eden is not a difficult game; the designers put the emphasis on adventure, not game play. You do everything using a whirling cube mouse pointer. When it's time to speak, the cube displays a red mask. When a hand appears, it means you can pick up something. An eye means you can examine an object. Double-click on the party bar at the top of the screen for a detailed view of your current crew; click on yourself to save the game and set other options.

Lost Eden will be a joy for the younger set. As I played, both my children became enthralled with the adventure. Lost Eden manages to bridge the age gap without insulting my intelligence—or my kids'. Such family-oriented games seem to be as rare as dinosaurs these days. As satisfying as a good fantasy novel, you could say that Lost Eden is a garden of fun.

The Tyrans are fearsome foes.

TIPS

- If you have something in your inventory you don't want, give it to Tug. He'll eat it.
- Triceratops do not eat eggs.
- Raptors love gold, but need Objects of Power to fight.
- Don't let the wizard's paranoia lead you astray.
- Listen to your sister. She does know the way.

Alone in The Dark 3

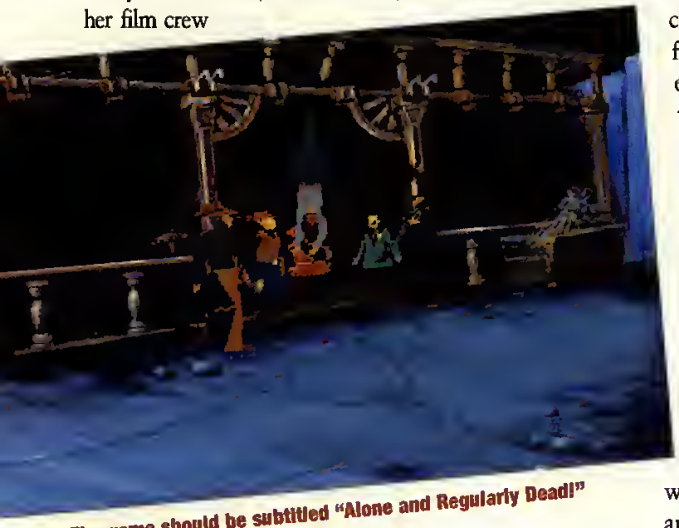
By Rick Raymo

You get the same multiple camera angles that made the first two games look so great.

There's a new sheriff in the town of Slaughter Gulch—and his name's Carnby.

Gunslinger ghouls, supernatural stagehands, and a demon-dropping detective—these are the telltale signs that Edward Carnby's on another case. You'd better bring both your shootin' iron and a night light to Alone in the Dark 3.

This time around, I-Motion sends the paranormal private eye to a ghost town (go figure) named Slaughter Gulch where Emily Hartwood (from Alone 1) and the rest of her film crew



The game should be subtitled "Alone and Regularly Dead!"

have disappeared while working on a western. Carnby gets a call from Greg Saunders, Hollywood big-shot (and Grace's father in Alone 2), who offers Carnby $1,200 to clear up the mystery. As usual, the case gives our hero more than he bargained for.

For those who haven't played the previous games, the Alone series puts you in control of a polygon-based character in a spooky action/adventure setting. You collect items, waste ghouls, and solve puzzles to get from area to area. You fight with fists, feet, and various types of weaponry (from blasting caps to six-shooters) while using keyboard commands to move Carnby around the screen. The game's trademark multiple camera angles look terrific, but the shifting perspectives can be a bit unsettling for first-time players.

Technology hounds looking for major changes compared with the previous two titles will be disappointed. But gamers who loved the look and feel of Alone 1 and 2 should be perfectly happy with this much larger version of the same. Controlling Carnby is still difficult at best, but once you accept tbat limitation, you can have a pretty good time. And even though you'll change characters for a bit mid-game, as you do in Alone 2, the game handles the transition much more comfortably this time.

The only major change lets players choose from three difficulty settings, each affecting Carnby's and the enemies' hit points. Besides making things easier for novice gamers, the new settings also offer replay value for die-hard fans. So you've beaten the game? Crank up the difficulty and try it again.

Although the game comes only on CD-ROM, you won't find lots of cool intermission cut scenes and tons of spoken dialog—sorry, folks. Putting this game on CD-ROM appears to be a case of one disc costing less to produce than 12 floppies. The music is better than in previous iterations and makes good use of your MIDI or wavetable sound card, but that's about it.

Alone 3 is by no means groundbreaking; in many ways, it's just more of the same. If you loved the first two and want more of Ed's antics, this one will be a winner for you, wacky can't-hit-a-barn-door-with-your-Smith & Wesson-control and all. But if you require something new to have a good time, you'll have to look elsewhere.

Alone in the Dark 3
I-Motion
800-443-3386

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386DX/33, 4MB RAM, VGA, Sound Blaster, mouse
Street Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

If you couldn't get enough of the last two Alone In The Dark adventures, here's some more. If you've had enough and want something new, this isn't for you.

TIPS

• The first token goes in the player piano. • If a painting can be exited, it can also be entered. • Magnesium flashes and film reels are apt to explode if used together. Two-headed monsters beware! • A door or safe lock will hold no secrets for a Ziegler watch. • One-Eyed Jack's favorite card was tha Ace of Diamonds. • When dressed for a Mercury commercial, tar and silver salts on your claws deal very nicely with werewolves.

Wings of Glory

By Al Giovetti

The fields of France are mere backdrops for fire in the skies.

Wood and wire may survive battle—maybe.

In 1917, the skies over France were filled with the sound of gunfire. Aircraft made of wood, canvas, and bits of metal battled in aerobatic duels to the death.

This was not the sterile "video game" aerial combat of today's jets; these early biplanes and triplanes could barely stay in the air. Engines without throttles made landing a nightmare. Bullets easily ripped away huge patches of fabric, often puncturing gas tanks and causing blazes that burned the helpless pilot to death. Convinced that the plane was worth more than the man, early air forces withheld parachutes, hoping to force the pilot to bring the plane back. Despite all this, pilots and planes blundered their way through the creation of aerial warfare. There would never be another air war like the War to End All Wars.

Now, Origin's Wings of Glory chronicles the life of an American recruit in the Royal Air Force as he fights for his country—and his pride—against countless German opponents. True to the Origin style, the game envelopes its flight-sim segments in a compelling storyline. Merciless German ace Ulrich Gertmann develops a grudge against the American and harasses him throughout the game, which, of course, culminates in a one-on-one air duel between the two rivals. Missions are separated by animated narrated conversations with wingmen, mechanics, and commanders to propel the story. The simple, linear plot is well-written, if melodramatic and morbidly obsessed with the futility of war.

You get to fly five different vintage aircraft—a SPAD SXIII, Sopwith F.1 Camel, Sopwith Scout "Pup," and a R.A.F. S.E.5a, as well as a captured Fokker Dr.I—in more than 45 missions. Among the actions you'll undertake are balloon busting; strikes on factories, trains, and convoys; and escort and intercept missions. World War I planes make for exciting missions because they are difficult to fly, fragile, and prone to self-destruction even with no help from the enemy. Also, while relatively slow, they offer a level of maneuverability and seat-of-the-pants flying that has gradually disappeared from air combat. Origin flight fans won't be disappointed with Wings of Glory's sophisticated controls, including ground and air targeting, 14 zoomable views, time compression, navigation map, and seven targeting commands. Novices will have to spend time getting up to speed, however.

Wire-frame graphics are covered with light-sourced texture maps, providing colorful, ultra-realistic planes, clouds, buildings, trees, and other objects. Neat effects include pieces of cloth and wood that actually tear off and hang in the air as if suspended behind the plane. Even the low-resolution VGA graphics are unusually attractive and show off the extraordinary talent of Origin's artists. The game's sound is even better, with creaking air frames, gunfire, engine roar—even the scream of a downed pilot. The final word on Wings of Glory? Flight-sim enthusiasts just have to take a look at this one.

Wings of Glory
Origin Systems
800-245-4525

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $55-70

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

This flight simulator/adventure game mixes a well-written plot with a sophisticated flight model. A must for flight-sim fans.

SPIN

- **Use "time burst" on takeoff to get right to the action.**
- **Use rockets to attack blimps, and approach them from above in the front and the rear. Do not attack blimps in level flight from the sides.**
- **Origin recommends that you do not try to bomb at low altitude.**
- **Using the rudder pedals and the F7 target view are essential to winning. Hit F7 to find out where the enemy is. Hit F7 again for a better idea of where your bullets are going.**
- **There's no invulnerable mode, so you'll have to repeat missions over and over until you get them right.**
- **Use Shift-F6 to locate ground targets and Control-T to target them. Take out only the enemy targets; destroying civilian ground structures will get you executed by your own men.**

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SIMULATION

Zeppelin

By David Israels

Tha mora workars you amploy, the taster you'll produce new airships.

Zeppelin beckons you to soar into a romantic chapter of early air travel: Experience the agony and ecstasy of flying massive airships halfway around the world, the challenge of building a transportation empire, and the excitement of developing new technologies to keep that empire aloft. Sadly, this business simulation from MicroProse fails for the most part to deliver on its invitation.

Storms can wreak havoc—fly through them at your peril.

As play begins, so does the disappointment. You can choose between only two levels—easy and hard. There are no effective computer opponents to play against. And though you're offered a host of Teutonic visages to represent your persona in the game, none of the choices affects the game's outcome.

Soak the rich with scheduled flights.

You start the turn-based game with $2 million and a single flagship. Game play is divided into four essential tasks: Flying flagships between cities to increase earnings and set long-distance records, establishing profitable scheduled routes, building airships, and developing new technologies. There's also a simplistic stock-market model and a jarringly silly romantic subplot that has you scouring the world to marry a woman named Rosanne Brixton. Winning her hand has no effect on the game.

Though Zeppelin spans 1901 to 1940, success—at least on the easy level—comes quickly. I was in the black by 1904, employing a simple strategy of investing heavily in technology and construction so I could churn out a constant line of new and improved zeppelins. Only the Depression posed a challenge to profitability. Yet time moves slowly in Zeppelin-land. With each turn comprising only one week, the game stretches over some 2,000 turns, during which you perform the same dozen or so tasks repeatedly.

It's true that repetition is often an unavoidable part of strategy/simulation games. For instance, Transport Tycoon is often repetitive, but its excellent animation and sound keep you intrigued.

But Zeppelin is inexplicably drawn in pallid sepia tones and its minimal animation actually adds to the tedium. When you send off a flagship off, for example, a thumbnail-sized icon of the ship drifts slowly across the world map. If you've gotten to the maximum of three flagships, you wait endless seconds as first one tiny icon lazily crosses the screen, followed—after a screen redraw—by another icon, and, finally, the third.

The vaguely Wagnerian music is abominable and can't be turned off without also turning off the game's digitized speech. That's not such a bad thing, since the game's sound is bare-bones. Almost all you get is a "Jawohl, Sir" each time you order your flagship to fly.

Though technical requirements are undemanding, this CD-ROM game is virtually unplayable from a double-speed CD-ROM drive. Each screen redraw took about seven seconds, though I solved that problem by dumping the game's 5.3MB of data onto my hard drive.

The larger problem here is that Zeppelin is just not the kind of wickedly well-designed, deeply evocative strategy game that you have every right to expect from MicroProse.

Zeppelin
MicroProse
800-879-7529

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386, 640KB RAM, DOS 3.3, VGA, mouse
List Price: $29.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★
VALUE:	★ ★

This strategy/simulation just isn't up to MicroProse's usually high standards.

SIM-TIPS

- The key to making money early in the game is to win contracts to build airships. You'll have to bid against an opponent, but don't worry: You'll usually get the job, because the game's artificial intelligence is brain-dead.
- To rake in the bucks on scheduled routes, use two airships going short distances at reasonable rates.
- Keep up the maintenance on your flagships, or they'll crash. Remember, you can repair a zeppelin only at its home wharf in Berlin.
- If you employ 20 to 30 scientists, your new technologies will develop at a nice clip. A larger number of scientists isn't cost-effective.
- If you run short of cash, sell stock in your own company. You can sell as much as 49 percent.

Electronic Entertainment SHOPPER

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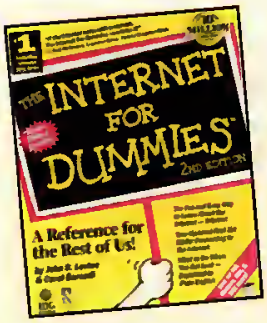

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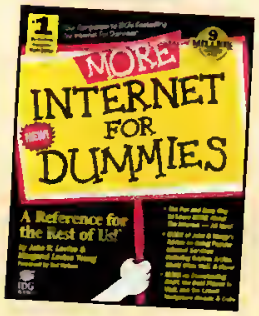

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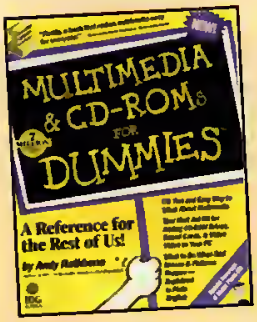

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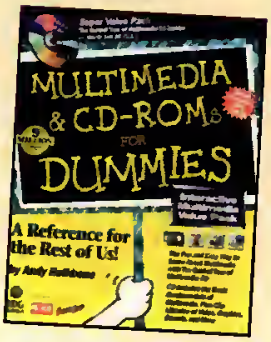

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By Peter Spear & Jeremy Spear

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BK-326
$18.95
Platform: IBM-PC CD-ROM

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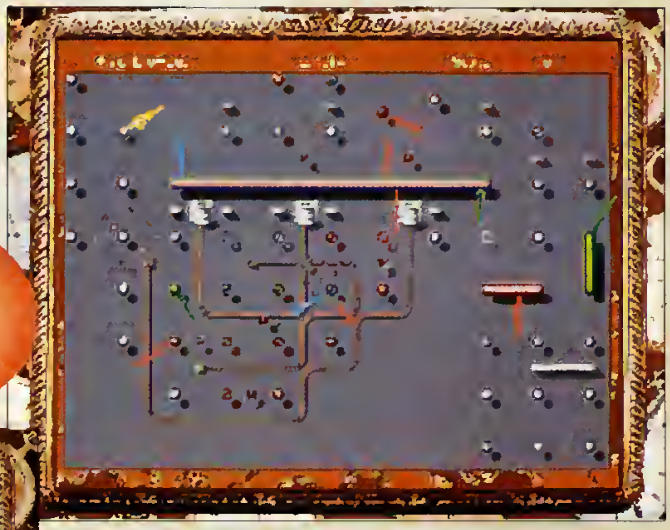
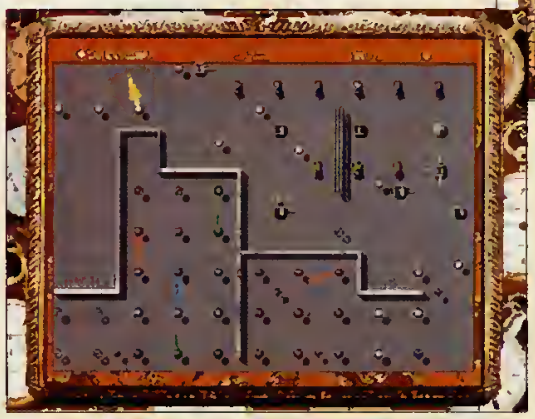
ClockWerx

By Barry Brenesal



...so how do you get from here to there?



Spinning clock hands everywhere...

One thing separates Tetris creator Alexei Pajitnov from all his imitators: imagination. And that trait clearly shines through in the titles that Spectrum HoloByte produces under Pajitnov's direction. In ClockWerx, a brain-teaser based on the sadly overlooked Spin Doctor game from Callisto (reviewed February 1994, page 98), Pajitnov has created anything but yet-another Tetris clone. Instead, ClockWerx is a totally distinct game with unique objectives, strategies, and tools. Yet, as with Tetris, ClockWerx is easy to learn, very challenging to play well, and extremely addictive.

ClockWerx's protagonist is a rotating golden clock hand that resides inside a grid of dots. You must move the hand to the goal dot across the screen by flipping it from dot to dot. All you have to do is decide which direction to rotate in and which dot to flip to.

Sounds simple, does it? Did we forget to mention the obstacles in our ticking hero's path? Red, green, and blue clock hands that can annihilate you are scattered throughout some play fields. Stationary enemies like cannons, tanks, bombs, and spike dots are generally easier to avoid—but not if you've awakened a sleeping acid puddle in the process. This little blob will slowly follow you all around ClockWerx's playing field, and woe betide any golden clock hand that gets in its way. Sometimes an acid puddle will even replicate, forming a pair of identically motivated perils.

Not everything is stacked against you in ClockWerx. When your clock hand touches an hourglass, you gain more time on a level, and when you touch slowdown dots, you reduce enemy clock hands to a fraction of their normal speed. Hyperdots can teleport you out of danger—or into it. Whack wallbusters in the direction of a wall you want to disintegrate. And don't neglect the bonus dots that grant enormous increases to your score and ego.

If controlling all these game elements still sounds too easy for you, remember that ClockWerx offers 100 playing fields of increasing complexity. You can also choose from four levels of playing difficulty that affect enemy speed, number of enemies, and your time limit per playing field. Play ClockWerx solo, or take turns going head-to-head against a friend.

You won't find any online help in this game, but you won't need any. The written documentation is self-explanatory, and useful "hints" for particular levels are always visible on the attractively designed playing screens themselves. In Windows, ClockWerx's Super VGA graphics deploy color sparsely but effectively—a sensible decision, given Windows' slow graphics performance.

A winner? You bet. ClockWerx is an obsessive little gem of a game that's sure to consume all your normally productive time for weeks or months to come. Play this one at your own peril.

ClockWerx
Spectrum HoloByte
800-695-4273

Platform: Windows, Mac, Win CD, Mac CD
Requires: 386/33, 4MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA, mouse, sound card
Street Price: $28

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

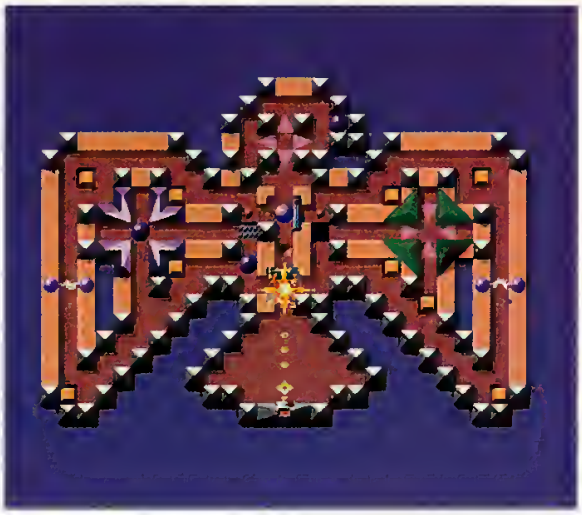
Another great action/strategy game anointed by the designer of Tetris.

TIPS

• On some levels, you must first light fuses that blow up walls surrounding your goal dot. • Your enemies can't be destroyed, not even by bullets, dynamite, or wallbusters—so don't bother trying. • The timer doesn't start until you move your clock hand, so study tha opening situation for as long as you want. • Master changing the direction of your clock hand as you move from dot to dot. It's a skill you'll really appreciate after you complete the first 10 levels.

Megamaze

By Ann M. Marcus



Gatas, Pits, and Nasty Balls impede your peth.

Without getting too philosophical, CapDisc's Megamaze is a lot like real life—a series of winding paths with the potential for something nasty around every turn.

This challenging DOS disc comes jam-packed with more than 200 colorful labyrinths organized into 90 levels of play. There's also a catchy soundtrack.

Game play starts out simply. You can maneuver with either the keyboard's Arrow keys or with a joystick, but unless you have a surgeon's touch, the joystick is too clumsy for this game.

The first maze familiarizes you with the basics. Your goal is to safely move the light blue Object Ball to a particular location at the other side of the maze—either a Finishing Pit or a Vortex. If you land in the Finishing Pit, marked by four green triangles, you move to the next level. Some levels have multiple maze screens, and a Vortex is a red and yellow throbbing square—there may be more than one on a screen—that will take you to the next maze screen.

More than 200 mazes await...

...including this ribbiting fallow.

To earn the designation Mazemaster at each level, you must either deposit four purple Nasty Balls before you sink the Object Ball or beat the clock by finishing within the time requirement set for each level (listed in the back of the small, efficient manual). When you complete each level, you get a secret code that lets you go right to the subsequent level the next time you play.

This game requires dexterity and strategy, not to mention good peripheral vision, because you won't be alone in the maze. The Nasty Balls mirror your Object Ball's every move. When you move the Object ball, all of the Nasty balls move in the same direction, provided they aren't hindered by a wall or another obstacle. The Nasty Balls can be friend or foe, depending on how well you handle them, and choreographing their combined movements becomes a tricky ballet. These bad boys have kamikaze tendencies; they long to destroy you, themselves, and each other. Some mazes have only two Nasty Balls, others four, and some contain a Nasty Ball Generator that creates a new Nasty Ball every five seconds, keeping a maximum of four on the screen at any one time.

The trick to Megamaze is to finagle the Nasty Balls into removing obstacles and triggering or destroying the rest of the game's arsenal without sacrificing your Object ball. You'll encounter Dimples, indentations requiring extra force to escape; Gates, which control passage to crucial pathways; and Pits of Doom, which swallow your Object Ball whole if you're not careful. There are also Laser Cannons and Spark Generators that pack a wallop.

Installing Megamaze can be a little confusing. Oddly, you choose Configure before Install to set the sound card and joystick options. Then you install the game files. Finally, you press Escape to save your settings and leave the Install menu, but nothing on screen tells you all this. You have to read the instructions in the README file.

Once you get past the bumpy installation, however, Megamaze's crafty deterrents conspire to make your journey through the world of mazes about as stress-free as a stroll through downtown Sarajevo, but definitely a whole lot more fun.

Megamaze
CapDisc
800-227-3472

Platform: DOS CD, CD-i
Requires: 386SX, 4MB RAM, DOS 3.3, VGA, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card
List Price: $34.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Meze lovers will have a blast in Megamaze.

CHEATS

• Use these secret codes to access the advanced levels:

Level	Code
5	2781
10	6185
15	7866
20	9366
25	2115
50	2065
90	1130

TIPS

• Wedging the bells into a cranny lets you hold them still while others can move. • Use Nasty Balls to destroy other Nasty Balls that are in your wey, to open closed Gates, to close Pits of Doom for the Object ball, and to destroy Laser Cannons and Deflectors. • Line up several Nesty Balls to travel in front of the Object Ball to trigger Laser Cannons and Spark Generators. The Object Bell can then sneak by while the weapons ere recycling. • At Level 18, you need three Nesty Bells in a row to rescue the Object Ball. Leave one of them behind the second pit so it can trigger the cover when the Object Ball returns.

Take Your Best Shot

By Fredric Paul

Take a swing at Bill Plympton's bizarre version ot baseball.

Take Your Best Shot uses Bill Plympton's eccentric animation to mix bizarre takes on classic arcade games with silly screen savers, weird Windows wallpaper, unusual icons and sound files, and an over-the-top battle between a pair of hapless office workers.

The title is the first in a planned series of game-oriented discs from 7th Level, the company behind Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time. Take Your Best Shot is a multi-dimensional product that's one part dysfunctional desktop accessory, one part antisocial fantasy re-enactment, and several parts rude adaptation of simple twitch games. Plympton's award-winning animations—taken from his feature-length film *The Tune*—give the game its distinctive visual style and its sniggering yet somehow sophisticated sense of humor.

Take Your Best Shot
7th Level
214-489-8100

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486SX/25, Windows 3.1, DOS 3.3, Super VGA, sound card, mouse
Street Price: $19.99

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK: ★ ★
VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★

Cute, inexpensive, and diverting, Take Your Best Shot lands a solid blow tor casual gamers.

Like the Monty Python title, Take Your Best Shot includes several simple games dressed up with nutty animation. But the three games here play much more smoothly than those on Complete Waste of Time, and they live up to the originals even without the twisted animation. Head Shot, for example, revives Breakout, but instead of eliminating anonymous blocks, you must direct the bouncing ball to blast away at a series of heads. Hit them, and they inflate, pop, bleed, drool, explode, and otherwise expire. Some tough noggins need to be smacked more than once to give up the ghost, however.

Hot Shot is little more than the venerable Pong with multiple paddles, unsavory noises, and a squishy head in the middle of the playing field. You can play with two paddles—one on either side of the screen—or go nuts with the four-paddle version that forces you to protect the top and bottom as well as the sides. Adding the extra paddles makes the game much more challenging, especially when the ball goes into the corners.

Finally, Line Shot is Plympton's take on baseball, with a one-button pitch and swing controls. The game is brainless, but it's surprisingly satisfying to watch the hand-drawn ball sail into the outfield.

Take Your Best Shot also delivers amusement in less goal-oriented activities. The title's namesake section is billed as an "interactive office stress reliever." Basically, a series of hot keys and mouse clicks let you control two office workers as they beat the stuffing out of each other in increasingly inventive ways. It's as if Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote showed up to spread mayhem in Scott Adams' Dilbert comic strip. Heads and other body parts get pinched, prodded, stretched, snapped, crushed, and exploded—then pop calmly back into place as the program keeps score. You can even assign names to the characters to vent your frustrations more directly.

If all that isn't enough, the disc also allows you to use Plympton's characters as Windows icons, attach gassy noises to Windows events, or set up Windows screen savers and wallpaper.

Take Your Best Shot isn't a serious program equipped to compete with Myst, Doom II, or other high-tech games. It won't keep you occupied for weeks. But it is amusing, entertaining, and less than $20. And that's not a bad combination.

The interactive office stress reliever offers clever ways to punish your enemies.

TIPS

• In Head Shot, watch out for the lightning bolts that sometimes appear when you blow up a head. It one touches your paddle, you'll be helpless tor a tew moments. And remember: The bolts bounce around tor a moment betore they disappear. • In Hot Shot, use the head in the middle ot the screen to break up the action. And play with all tour paddles: It's harder but a lot more tun. Just keep the ball away from the corners. • In Line Shot, don't be tooled by low pitches. No ball is too low to not be called a strike. On the other hand, don't be atraid to take a strike when you're ahead in the count. Walks count.

Mortal Kombat II

By Lawrence Neves

Kitana puts you in the air. Try combining this with any of her other moves.

Some moves—like Scorpion's Spear—stun opponents for a fleeting moment.

Nothing can prepare you.

At least, that's what the ads say, and they may be more correct than they know. Nothing could prepare you for Mortal Kombat II, especially if you're not a thumb-twitching, arcade-hopping, quarter-crunching maniac. Mortal Kombat II, which debuted in the arcades more than a year ago and on Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo last year, is the type of game that's long on frantic, blood-spewing action and short on everything else.

The story line is simple: At the end of the last Mortal Kombat game, you defeated the ethereal master of ceremonies, Shang Tsung, for the title of Supreme Warrior. Shang and his buddies have returned, this time to force you into a fight with Shang's boss, Shao Kahn, a villain who looks like a cross between Arnold Schwarzenegger and a Cuisinart.

Fighting an unarmed opponent.

Not surprisingly, though, you have to fight your way to Shao Kahn. The matches are best of three, one-on-one slugfests. Choose from one of twelve characters, such as the ice-throwing ninja Sub Zero or the steel-fan prima donna Kitana. Winning isn't easy; you need a quick eye and fast hands. And beyond each character's series of standard kicks and punches, you'll want to learn their special moves, like Kitana's Fan Lift (pictured above), Jax's Gotcha Grab, and Reptile's Acid Spit.

Truly bloodthirsty gamers will look for those controversial Fatalities—gruesome, blood-spurting end moves that serve to further humiliate an opponent. They range from dragons biting a body in half to ripping off characters' arms. In a concession to political correctness, you can also do Babalities, which turn your enemy into a baby, and Friendships, which present your opponent with anything from birthday cakes to autographed photos.

One word says everything you need to know about the game's interface: joystick. Playing this game with the keyboard is practically impossible. And because Mortal Kombat II is unkind to the uninitiated, read the manual and learn a few moves before you take on your kids.

The PC graphics are fairly close to the video-game versions, but game play is abysmally slow, especially on a 386. Every move endures a choppy slowdown, even with the graphics quality set lower, as the manual suggests.

The performance problems mean that the Genesis and Super Nintendo versions are a better bet. Only players dedicated to their PCs should jump on the computer edition of Mortal Kombat II.

TIPS

• Need some Fatalities? Try these whenever the computer says, "Finish Him." • Kitana's Head Lob: Block, Block, Block, Block, then High Kick when in close. • Jax's Arm Pull: Block, Block, Block, Block, then Low Punch (standing just outside punching range). • Liu Kang's Dragon: Down, Toward, Away, Away, then High Kick when in close. • Combination moves do lots of impressive damage. For example, use Kitana's Fan Lift, followed by a leaping punch, then the Fan Throw before your opponent hits the ground.

Mortal Kombat II
Acclaim Entertainment
516-624-9300

Platform: DOS CD, DOS
Requires: 386DX/33, 4MB RAM, VGA, MS-DOS 5.0
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

The arcade classic comes to the PC, but it can't stand up to the video-game versions.

ACTION

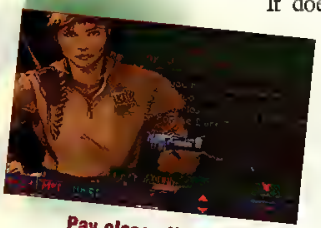
Dark Forces

By Vox Day

Stormtroopers are the least of yoer worries in Dark Forces.

It didn't take a marketing genius to come up with the concept for Dark Forces, LucasArts' new Doom-meets-*Star Wars* game. 3-D action from a first-person point of view is the hottest game genre in years, and what red-blooded male hasn't wanted to duel at blasterpoint with Stormtroopers?

The much-anticipated Dark Forces (see preview, October 1994, page 84) has plenty of Stormtroopers, along with virtually every other denizen of the *Star Wars* universe. Everything from the little laser probes of the first movie to the Gamorrean Guards of the third makes an appearance, including a cameo from the mercenary Boba Fett himself. Playing Dark Forces feels very much like being in a *Star Wars* movie, with extremely familiar sound effects and images that appear to have been grabbed right from the original Hollywood sets.



Pay close attention to your mission briefings. They contain some very useful information.

It doesn't seem as if George Lucas had much of a hand in writing the game's script, though. The Dark Forces plot is a tad thin compared with the other Star Wars games, but still more complete than Doom or Doom II. It revolves around your character Kyle Kitarn, a mercenary who takes on the job of infiltrating imperial territory to discover information about the Empire's lethal new Dark Troopers. A reasonable storyline, to be sure, but who wouldn't rather have played as a true-believing member of the Rebel Alliance?

If the plot is weak, the game's 3-D engine is very strong. You can look up and down, jump, and crouch—not just move-and-shoot a la Doom.

Animated cut scenes propel Dark Forces' plot. Yes, there really is one.

Crouching is important to slither through the small crawlspaces you will face. Very large and impressive pieces of machinery lie about, and some of them actually move. These touches help create an environment that feels more realistic than any other 3-D action game. In Dark Forces, you don't need to be told that you're in a mine or a high-security cell block—you can tell just by looking around.

The action is fast-paced, particularly on the Hard setting (try Easy or Medium to face fewer enemies), and you get to collect and use nine weapons of varying capability, although most seem a bit wimpy compared to Doom's satisfying arsenal. The game's levels are large and disturbingly difficult. There's much more strategic thought needed to figure out these puzzles than in Doom; you don't just run around collecting keys.

The levels' size and difficulty can be a curse, though, because games are saved only at the end of a level. You won't find modem or network support in Dark Forces, either. LucasArts insists that Dark Forces was always intended as a solo game, but it's disappointing that some sort of multiplayer option isn't available.

As a single-player game, though, Dark Forces can go toe-to-toe with any action game on the market, and LucasArts' latest is a no-brainer purchase for serious *Star Wars* fans.

Dark Forces
LucasArts Entertainment
800-782-7927

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0
List Price: $49.95-$69.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ½
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Playing Dark Forces is like starring in the next *Star Wars* movie—directed by the Doom Gey. The lack of meltiplayer support is its only limitation.

CHEATS

• **Stumped? Bored? Jest too lazy to finish the game on yoer own? Give these helpful words a try; type them in while you're playing.** • **laskip: Skip to the next level.** • **lapostal: Give yourself e full complement of weapons and shields.** • **lacds: View the full map complete with enemy locations.** • **laredlite: Freeze your opponents where they stand.**

TIPS

• **Looking for ice cleats to help you get a grip? Keep yoer head down, or yoe'll miss them.** • **Carefully placed mines can be e useful means of transportation.** • **Pay attention when you're in elevators, end be sere to look behind you.** • **Hidden doors aren't the only thing yoe'll find in some walls. Look carefully for hidden buttons, too.** • **Can't survive e certain level? Go to the configuration screen end turn on yoer Seper Shield. You'll be pretty much invulnerable to enemy attacks.**

Marathon

By Peter Olafson

"They're everywhere!"

Look up, or prepare to die fast.

After surviving Doom II, Dark Forces, Heretic, Cyclones, The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki, and Descent, I'm just about Doomed out. If I see one more long hallway with bad guys making bird sounds at the other end, you'll be reading about me in the *National Enquirer.*

So why, then, am I 14 levels into Bungie Software's Marathon—and playing with the same happy eagerness with which I approached the original Doom?

Easy. This Doom-style Mac shooter offers a range of subtle, thoughtful improvements over Doom itself. Together, they add up to a rich action-adventure that's far more than the sum of its parts.

At its core, of course, this is a 3-D action game for high-end machines—you'll want at least an '040 or Power Mac—in which you clear alien interlopers from the decks of the colony ship *Marathon.* You penetrate the darkness, pick up ammo and weapons, throw switches, consult your motion detector, and help the aliens get acquainted with their guts.

But Marathon changes the experience in positive ways. For instance, Doom automatically targets enemies at higher or lower elevations. In Marathon, you have to look up and down to aim—no small task when you're under fire and low on ammo. While Doom is a 2-D world artfully made to appear 3-D, Marathon's levels are complexes with corridors that criss-cross and overlap one another. You can jump directly over enemies when vaulting over a gap between platforms.

You'll also find yourself working through the same territory many times, so you live within this space more intimately. In Doom, you could save anywhere. Marathon permits saves only at certain widely spaced terminals, and the same goes for healing and replenishing your supply of oxygen.

And you're not alone with your demons. Civilians are still on board, running around like the proverbial chicken-sans-head, clogging the corridors, and wailing "They're everywhere!" On certain levels, you'll need to keep as many civilians alive as possible, with the outcome influencing the story. Oh, yes: There really is a story here. But you'll have to discover it while you play. It's fed to you in dribs and drabs (along with maps and instructions) via video terminals strewn across the levels.

And that's to say nothing of neat touches such as the different representations for alien corpses (depending on the weapon with which you've dismembered them) or the sound of ricochets when you miss.

While you'll rarely bump into Marathon's limitations, the game isn't perfect. As in Bungie's earlier Pathways into Darkness, even the most intimidating enemies appear more cartoony than menacing. Perhaps that's why the game doesn't have Doom's "hot" feel. The video terminals generally spit information out all at once that might be better distributed across a level. And the graphics in the full-screen mode seem rather rough-and-ready.

But aside from that, the nastiest thing I can say about Marathon is that it turned the text on my Power Mac's desktop a mustard yellow. Not that I mind. It's sort of a yellow badge of courage—almost the color of alien blood.

Marathon
Bungie Software
312-563-6200

Platform: Macintosh
Requires: 68020, 3MB RAM, System 6.0.5, 256-color 13-inch monitor
List Price: $69.99

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Doom oe the Mec, oely better.

TIPS

• On tho sue-bathieg-statioe level, use the central oxygen-refill station as e bese eed explore the lovel as e series of "mis-sloes." Also, take special noto of the elevator in an alcove far to the south; it lets you escape from two otherwise leescapable areas. • Towerds the eed of the level oe which you're hijecked by the rogue ertificiel intolligence Durandal, you'll twice find yourself trapped in tight quarters. In the first, kill all the enemies, thee drop into the T-shaped pit aed open the secret door et the center of the "T." In the other, go to the far end of the platform aed hit tho left-heed switch. Thoe quickly turn left aed run—don't walk—to the pletform ie tho distaece before it rises. • At tho beglenieg of the level oe which you have to rescue the security detachmont, rue! Heeg e left aed thoe your first right, eed use the civilians to block the aliee edveece while you cleae up inside the enclosure. • Never be afraid to bail out of a bad situatioe. He who fights aed rues awey... • The full-screen mode looks eice if you heve the computieg horsepower, but most of the time you'll went to use the smaller wiedow thet keeps your radar ie view.

Unnecessary Roughness '95

By Andrew Miller

All the NFL teams await you.

There's an old saying in football, "You can't play the game unless you've got the horses." The cliché also holds true for football simulations, as demonstrated by Accolade's Unnecessary Roughness '95. If you have sufficient hardware, the game has no peer; otherwise, don't bother.

If you're properly equipped, Unnecessary Roughness '95 delivers the most important tools of a superior football simulation: realistic sound, authentic graphics, and challenging game play. You can play in either one- or two-player mode. If you're in a hurry, start up an exhibition game against any of the 28 NFL teams, or open a new 16-game season and fight for your chance at a Super Bowl.

Multiple camera angles put you into the action.

The play editor lets you fine-tune your offense and defense.

If you don't like the default teams, no problem—create your own in the Team Construction Set. Modify such player characteristics as skill, speed, strength, and intelligence to create your own dynasty. You can even steal players from other teams.

Even better, the game is licensed by the NFL and the NFL Players' Association, so you can work with all the real teams and players. The CD-ROM version also includes a complete bio of every player.

Like most football simulations, Unnecessary Roughness '95 offers dozens of playbooks based on real NFL offensive and defensive schemes. But true armchair quarterbacks will want to create their own plays. The Play Construction Set is complicated at first, but it will take only a couple of trial sessions before you're drawing up and practicing winning plays.

Of course, you may not need to. The game's artificial intelligence is good, but not perfect. Each team has its own playbooks, and some of them are too conservative to put up much of a fight. If you want more of a challenge, you can always assign the "aggressive" offensive playbook to your opponent.

Accolade does a decent job with the game's graphics. Close-up views show large and nicely detailed players. Movements, created with the help of motion-capture technology, are as realistic as any football simulation on the market. If the large players limit your view of the field, you can change camera angles, then save your favorite views for later use.

Sportscaster Al Michaels provides play-by-play commentary during the games, while the crowd cheers and players grunt and groan. If your system is a bit slow, you can turn off the various sounds to help performance. That's important, because the folks at Accolade recommend playing the game on a 486/66 with at least 16MB of RAM, and they're not kidding. Try Unnecessary Roughness on a 486/33 with 8MB of RAM, and game play becomes slow and choppy.

Even if you have the right equipment, Unnecessary Roughness exhibits some minor quirks. For one thing, you can't call a timeout during play selection. You first have to select your play and move up to the line of scrimmage, wasting valuable seconds. And when you call an audible, it's almost impossible to cycle through the various plays fast enough to return to your original play. You're forced to call a timeout to avoid a delay-of-game penalty.

But the meat of a football simulation is good graphics, quality sound, and tough computer opponents, and Unnecessary Roughness '95 has them all. If you're going to pass the pigskin this season, check out Unnecessary Roughness.

TIPS

- When creating your own plays, be sure to run through them in Practice mode to weed out possible penalties.
- The players follow your commands verbatim. If you tell your blockers just to block at the line of scrimmage, they'll do just that—and they won't block any further downfield.
- Try and run deep patterns against the computer defenses. Unless they are in man-to-man coverage, they won't cover a receiver 30 or 40 yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Put two defensive linemen in the same spot before a snap. The offensive lineman will block one, but the other will be free to make the tackle.

Unnecessary Roughness '95

Accolade
800-245-7744

Platform: DOS CD, DOS
Requires: 386/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA
List Price: $59.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

Unnecessary Roughness '95 takes the field with decent graphics, great sound, and tough computer opponents.

Slam City with Scottie Pippen

By Fredric Paul

If you're tough enough, Dream-Teamer Scottie Pippen gets in your face.

Slam City with Scottie Pippen isn't so much a computer game as an interactive basketball broadcast: Think *Yo! MTV Raps* with squeaky sneakers.

One of the first Pentium-only titles to hit the market, Slam City delivers full-screen hoop action. The game challenges you to best a series of four playground legends for a chance to go one-on-one against Scottie Pippen.

You play as Ace, the new guy on the court, trying to accumulate the one billion respect points needed to earn a shot at Pippen. Not surprisingly, you get respect by scoring and beating strong players, and lose it by letting your opponent score.

As in many of Digital Pictures' other games, the video perspective moves on its own, while you control Ace's movements within the frame. With joystick, mouse, or keyboard, you can lunge left or right, looking for an opening. Every so often, you'll find your opponent slightly out of position. Point the right way and hit the appropriate button, and you'll launcb a jumper or spin around the defender for a thundering dunk. Pick the wrong moment or break the wrong way, and he'll block your shot or—worse—steal the rock and jam one bome himself. On defense, watch your man carefully to block moves to the hoop, or step up to swat away weak jumpers.

Packed on four discs and demanding a double-speed CD-ROM drive, the game boasts near TV-quality resolution and surprisingly smooth motion. (A lower-resolution Sega CD version is also available, and a 486 version is in the works.)

The problem with Slam City is that despite the great visuals, game play is ridiculously simple. You either break or shoot at the right time—or not. Once you make a move—and the tougher players don't always make it clear when you should—you see video of the result, but you can no longer affect it.

Slam City defense means using your hands to block and steal.

Worse, although the game includes some 2,500 video clips, there are only about 40 different dunks per player. You'll quickly begin to see the same slams repeat themselves over and over again. You'll also soon become familiar with the trash talk from your opponents Fingers, Juice, Mad Dog, and Smash.

Once you finally get to play Pippen (after beating all four pretenders at least twice), you're subjected to a blatant Nike pitch. Then things get serious. Mr. Pippen doesn't exude much charisma, but he moves with astonishing grace and power. The difference between the All-Star and the earlier opponents is immediately obvious.

Slam City deserves credit for its slick TV-commercial look, realistic hip-hop soundtrack, and bold use of technology. But because it reduces the complexity of basketball to just two players and four buttons, you don't really feel part of the action the way you do playing games like NBA Jam.

Slam City with Scottie Pippen
Digital Pictures
415-345-5300

Platform: DOS CD, Snga CD
Requires: Pntium, 4MB RAM, doubln-spnnd CD-RDM drivn, sound card
List Price: $6D

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

This all-video game looks and sounds likn basknlball, but gamn play is absurdly limited.

CHEATS

• Slam City has several types of cheat codes. For example, you can type in codn words when you load the game, nt the volume screen, nnd during thn ball check sequences when you're nctunlly plnying the gnme. Try typing "FFLLY" ns Fingers tosses you the bnll to make the next breakaway Super Slnm. Try other hoop-related words nnd see what happens.

TIPS

• Use the keyboard, not the mouse or the joystick. You hnve only four dlscrete options anyway, and the arrow keys offer the most positive response. • Stay in the middln of thn screen until you're ready to shoot or break. • When playing ngnlnst Fingers, you can break from just slightly to thn correct sldn of the screen. Agnlnst tougher plnyers, you must be all the way over to get thn break. • To shoot n jumper, head to the sldn of the screen to create thn most room between you and your defender, both horizontally and vertically. • If you're really gcod, turn on thn Buckets option. Winner's outs lets you keep thn ball away from your opponent nnd run up the score quickly. • Just hit thn Enter key to skip through thn silly—and repetitive—commentary.

SPORTS

ESPN Baseball Tonight

By Donald St. John

The Boomer brings you today's matchups.

It's still a close one at the 'Stick, folks.

The trouble with Sony Imagesoft's ESPN Baseball Tonight is simple: It can't hit the curve.

That is, it can't keep up with the advancement curve of computer baseball games—better playability, more realistic graphics, increased use of video and sound, and a closer relation to real-life baseball. Bluntly, Baseball Tonight, which uses the same engine as the popular but aging Tony LaRussa Baseball II, would have been an all-star game a year ago. Today, with Hardball 4 setting the standard for hot baseball gaming and Tony III waiting in the wings, Baseball Tonight rides the pine.

This is Baseball Tonight's only real pathway to game video.

Baseball Tonight tries to set itself apart by enhancing Tony II with content from the ESPN sports network. Mainly, this means including *SportsCenter* anchors Chris Berman, who introduces the game from the studio, and Dan Patrick, who provides play-by-play. Patrick knows his stuff and has a fine, easy-to-listen-to broadcast voice, and he recorded enough sound samples that his call doesn't get overly repetitious. But even though you select real major league teams and use lineups based on real 1994 season stats, the narration makes the calls only by position—not by player name. Both Hardball 4 and the upcoming APBA Baseball for Windows 3.0 with Ernie Harwell's Broadcast Blast have moved well beyond this—particularly APBA, which calls the game using the names of any major leaguer in the history of the game (see Game On, April 1995, page 36).

Baseball Tonight falls farther out of contention when you get to actual play. The basic graphics are cartoonish, player motion isn't rendered in a fully human fashion (as Hardball's is), and balls sometimes fly at strange speeds. The perspective is limited to the view from behind home plate, and video is used in any significant sense only during the introduction sequences. For all that, ESPN will devour up to 54MB of your hard drive, although the game will play much more slowly using just 5MB of disk space.

To be fair, game play itself is decent, and comparable to other baseball titles. Player tendencies track actual stats fairly well, and you can compete in lots of different ways, from playing every batter in real time to letting the computer simulate entire games, one pitch to a batter. All of this can take place in scale-model versions of about half the real major league ballparks—although even there, Hardball 4's full complement of stadiums has ESPN beat.

This is Sony Imagesoft's first shot at a sports game, and the company does fine by 1994 standards. It's just that the fences are farther away than they used to be. If Sony wants to hit a home run with next year's edition, it needs to swing a lot harder. In the meantime, serious fans of computer baseball games should reserve space in their lineup for a more up-to-date competitor.

ESPN Baseball Tonight
Sony Imagesoft
800-922-7669

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/33, 4MB RAM, Super VGA, mouse, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card
List Price: $69.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★

Despite reasonable game play, ESPN Baseball Tonight's outmoded technology is out at home by a good 20 feet.

TIPS

- **Check your starting lineups carefully; the defaults tend to sit out sluggers a little more often than you'd like.**
- **You don't get pitch selections per se, but the arrow keys let you both set your pitcher up in different spots on the mound and control the ball. Put a little English on it the end of the pitch for best results.**
- **Your fastball runs inside very effectively if you pitch from the middle end hit the appropriate arrow key three-quarters of the wey to the plate.**
- **When batting, crowd the plate whenever possible; otherwise you're a sucker for the wide curve. (You'll occasionelly get to take a hit-by-pitch for the ol' team this way, too.)**
- **Beware the pitch that starts way outside; usuelly it'll breek back in like a spitter. Sit on this and pull the trigger et the last minute; your guy's bat speed is more then sufficient to catch up to it.**

New device turns your car stereo into a CD player...*with no installation!*

Breakthrough adapter plugs in, instantly transmitting sound from your portable CD player to your car stereo.

by Walker B. Hindelang

Do you ever wish your car had some of the amenities of those expensive luxury cars? Be honest. While some of them are unnecessary (like miniature wipers on your headlights), there are others that we would all appreciate. If I could choose just one luxury-car option, it would have to be an in-dash CD player. But did you know there is an easier, less expensive way to get CD sound in your car? It's called Sound Feeder.

How does it work? Sound Feeder is a unique car CD adapter that allows you to play music from a portable CD or cassette player through your car's existing stereo speaker system. Sound Feeder contains a miniature FM modulator that broadcasts the audio signal from your CD player to a blank channel on your FM radio.

Take it anywhere. With Sound Feeder, you can use your existing portable CD player in your car. This eliminates the need for the purchase and installation of an expensive in-dash system. Plus, because it is portable, you can unplug it and take it with you when you leave your car; this reduces the risk of theft.

Sound Feeder also has an adapter that will supply most portable CD players with power. Because they needn't rely on batteries to operate, they will run longer and be more cost-efficient. Your car doesn't have to have a cassette deck—any AM/FM radio will do.

The first of its kind. The company that makes Sound Feeder, Arkon Resources, has a 10 year history of electronic innovation. They pioneered the consumer market for cordless headphones for use with TVs. Other innovations include camcorder battery chargers, compact video lights for camcorders, universal AC/DC chargers and battery dischargers. It's no surprise, then, that they have produced the first transmitter-type car CD adapter that provides stereo sound and voltage conversion technology. In addition, Sound Feeder meets FCC regulations.

Just plug it in. Playing a portable CD player in your car is simple. Just plug Sound Feeder into your cigarette lighter, connect the audio input wire to your portable CD or cassette player and set it to the desired FM station. You can enjoy the amplified stereo sound of your portable CD player without the dangerous or illegal use of headphones.

Sound Feeder is guaranteed to work with any car stereo—old or new, cassette deck or no. Simply put, if your car has an AM/FM radio, with Sound Feeder and your own portable CD player it can have CD sound!

Factory-direct savings. Because we're bringing this offer direct from the manufacturer, you save the cost of middlemen and retail mark-ups. For a limited time, you can buy Sound Feeder for just $39. How else can you get CD sound in your car for so little? In addition, if you act now, buying Sound Feeder qualifies you for a $10 discount on the soft-side carrying case!

Sound Feeder and its carrying case both fit discreetly into your car interior.

How does it work?

Sound Feeder contains a miniature FM modulator that broadcasts the signal from your CD player to a blank channel on your car stereo. It can also provide power to many models, preserving battery life.

Connect Sound Feeder's audio input cord to the headphone or line-out jack of your portable CD player. Set the FM Band selector switch on the Sound Feeder for the portion of the FM radio band you wish to access. Once set to the desired station, it's ready to play!

The Sound Feeder advantage:

- **No installation.** *Forget about the hassle of installing an in-dash system—Sound Feeder simply plugs in!*
- **Theft-proof.** *Because you can easily disconnect your CD player and take it with you, there's nothing in your car to tempt a would-be thief.*
- **Universal.** *Sound Feeder will work with any AM/FM car stereo... even if you don't have a cassette deck!*
- **Convenience.** *Leave Sound Feeder plugged into your car and take your portable CD player with you.*
- **Value.** *You could pay up to $400 to purchase and install an in-dash CD player in your car. With Sound Feeder, you spend $39 and use your own portable CD player.*

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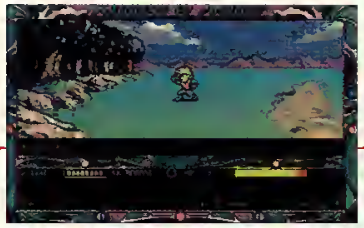
Knights of Xentar



Knights of Xentar

Xentar is in trouble: The Falcon Sword, legendary for its demon-slaying abilities, has been stolen. As Desmond, an unlikely hero who has been robbed of his money, weapons, and clothes, you must find your companions and retrieve the sword. Knights of Xentar, Megatech's first PC CD-ROM, is an animé adventure based on the popular Japanese *Dragon Knight* series. The dialogue is a blast, and the impressive comic-book graphics spice up the game's standard overhead perspective. (Megatech Software; 800-258-6342) —*JM*

Platform: DOS, DOS CD
Requires: 3B6, 640KB RAM, MS-DOS 3.3, VGA
List Price: $54.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★
VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★

Strip Blackjack

Strip Blackjack

The best creative minds of our generation are plugging away at creating multimedia titles, and this is what we come up with: your choice of facing off against three curvy blackjack dealers who are perfectly willing to toss off clothing each time you get closer to 21 than they do. Win a hand, and you get to rotate and examine each woman like you're inspecting a Christmas ham. Win the game and you'll find yourself flipping through a collection of photos of each girl, nekkid as a newborn, twisting and writhing on a blackjack table. Anyone for cards? (OEM; 800-626-8433) —*JD*

Platform: Mac/Win CD
Requires: 4MB RAM, 256-color display
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★
GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS: ★ ★
SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE: ★

Wheel of Fortune

Fans of *Wheel of Fortune* will be disappointed with this CD-ROM game, despite 5,000 puzzles and your very own video Vanna. Unfortunately, the video of the hostess and the contestants—nine different players who represent human and computer opponents—slows play to a crawl. To play at a decent pace (even on a high-end 486 with double-speed CD-ROM drive), you must turn off all of the game's video and animations. Even then, computer opponents take forever to complete their turns. Game play is bearable only when you play against two other human opponents with the video options turned off. But the biggest disappointment? Vanna doesn't even turn the letters; she merely saunters by the board in a trademark tacky dress. (Sony Imagesoft; 800-922-7669) —*CG*

Wheel of Fortune

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 386SX, 4MB RAM, Windows 3.1, mouse
List Price: $49.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★
GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★
VALUE: ★ ★

Bicycle Limited Edition for CD-ROM

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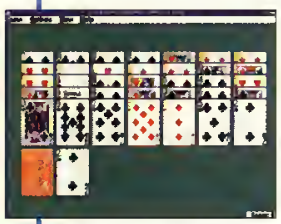

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Cars, Stars & Scars

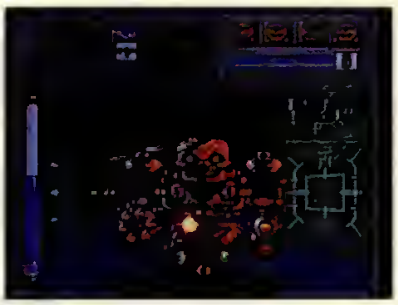
By Peter Olafson

Supreme Warrior gets in your face.

Battle Frenzy is yet another Wolfenstein-3D clone, this time with a stopwatch running. You're dumped into a twisty, mine-laden environment populated by brassy robots. The goal is to destroy end-of-level nodes and get back to the exit through now-darkened corridors before the clock runs out. This new CD edition retains the happy urgency of the cart version and adds secret rooms, four more levels (for a total of 16), and—in a nod to Doom DeathMatches—three two-player, head-to-head levels. The play area is still on the small side, however, and the game seems slightly slower. (Domark; 415-513-8929; $54.95)

Platform: Sega CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★

The Need for Speed is a solid four-wheeled complement to Road Rash that filters high-RPM thrills through an abundant sense of intelligence. Its "highlights" reel really does feature your last run's finest moments, and you can enjoy more than a hundred video segments of commentary from your opponent—all startlingly well-attuned to your actual performance.



Battle Frenzy gives you the first-person action.

On the other hand, the need for speed can't match Road Rash's crazy highs. The area you drive in is generally too narrow to hang a U-turn without backing up after a collision, and it's rather jarring to watch your crashing car ricocheting off invisible barriers, rather than plunging down cliffs and bridges. (Electronic Arts; 800-425-2545; $69.95)

Platform: 3DO
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Starblade is the best 3DO blaster to come down the pike in a while. This conversion of the Namco arcade game sends you whizzing over, under, and through major-league spacecraft. It's a shame you have to blow it all up, y'know? You don't steer—you're the gunner—but there's so much whizzing by that you'll be grateful for the help. (Panasonic Software Company; 408-653-1898; $59.95)

Platform: 3DO
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Guardian War is the first 3DO role-playing game available. It looks lovely, with all the little characters modeled in three dimensions a la Donkey Kong Country and gorgeous spell effects. The 3-D combat engine is far more sophisticated than the firing-squad approach of most cartridge-based RPGs. But game play is pretty much fight, fight, and then more fight, without a hint of story or exploration. (Panasonic Software Company; 408-653-1898; $59.95)

Platform: 3DO
Rating: ★ ★

Supreme Warrior instantly distinguishes itself from the horde of new 3DO beat-'em-ups. It's the first two-CD 3DO game; it's not side-view, but rather first-person; and it's video-based. A "feel" for the game is slow in coming—the intercutting of the video can be rough—and it'll be a while before you can assume a winning attitude. But when you get punched in the face, it feels as though you're getting punched in the face. Someone's doing something right here. (Digital Pictures; 415-345-0445; $61)

Platform: 3DO
Rating: ★ ★ ★

Iron Angel of the Apocalypse turns out to be made of tin. This clone Wolfenstein-3D shoot-'em-up sports mediocre graphics, sluggish movement, and cartoony enemies. The U.S. version of the Japanese title Tetsujin leaves all of its speech in Japanese with English subtitles. Neat video insets and cut-scenes aren't enough to distinguish it from a flood of these types of games. (Synergy Interactive; 800-734-9466; $59.99)

Platform: 3DO
Rating: ★

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs provides exactly that: Heroic couple Jack Tenrec (the wheel man) and Hannah Dundee (the gun gal) driving around in a big red Caddy, dodging dinosaurs, logs, and chasms. The 3-D effect is wonderfully speedy and detailed, the paths are many, and the crash scenes are quick on the draw. The graphic-novel feel comes through loud and clear, and it's exactly hard enough to keep you coming back. (Rocket Science; 800-989-7625; $59.99)

Platform: Sega CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Kether is an Infogrames-authorad hybrid of arcade, adventura and puzzle that starts you off in a polygonal asteroid field for a giant game of dodgeball. There are memory games and 3-D mazes (the weak link) later on. But the game keeps coming back to ingenious variations on those flying polygons. This is one of the best original CD-i games I've played. (Philips Media Games; 800-340-7888; $49.98)

Platform: CD-i
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

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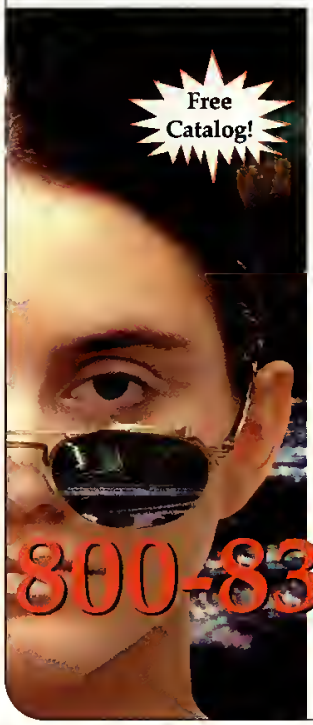

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TECH SHOP

By Christine Grech

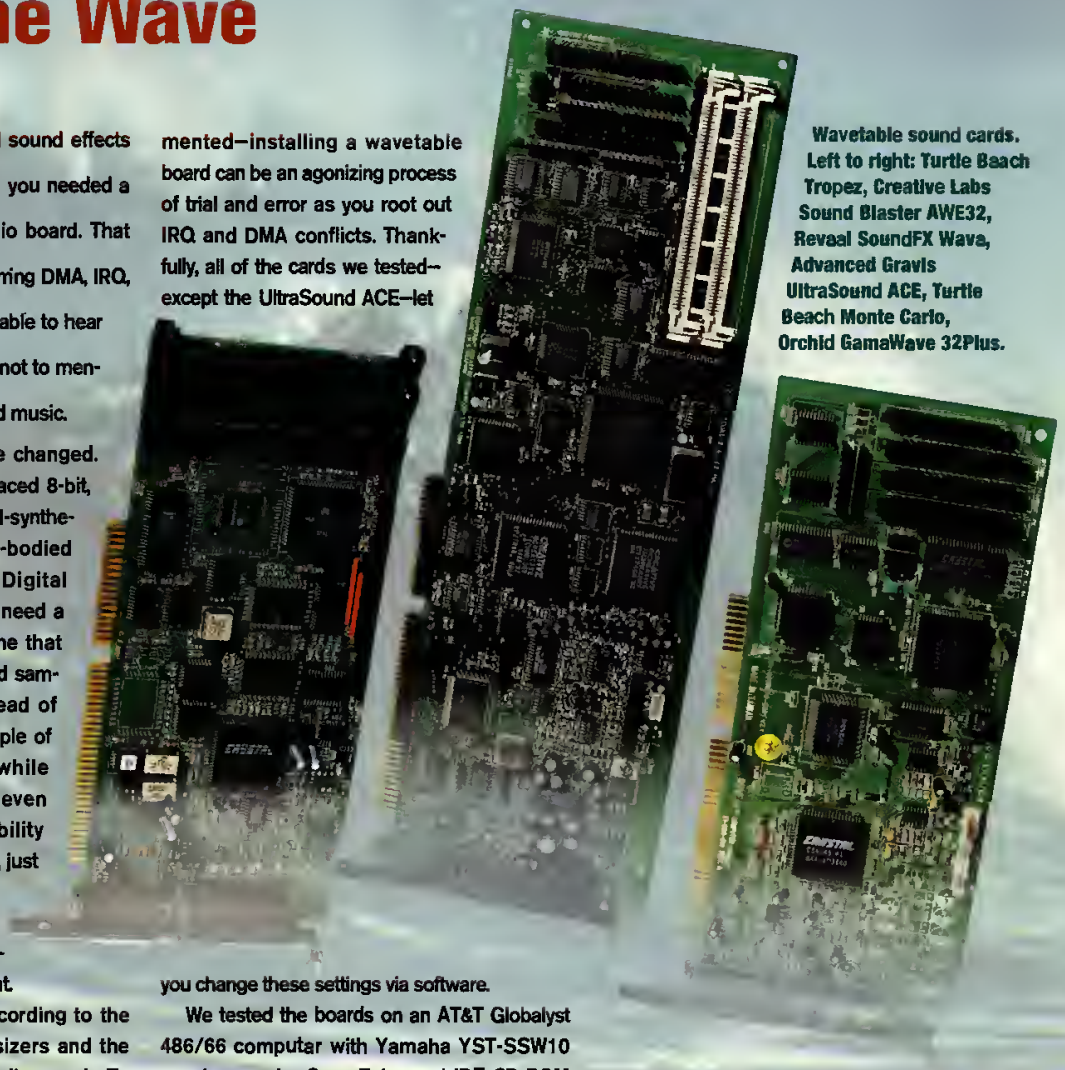
Catch The Wave

Getting decent music and sound effects out of PC games used to mean you needed a Sound Blaster-compatible audio board. That moniker almost guaranteed—barring DMA, IRQ, or other conflicts—that you'd be able to hear the requisite gunfire and dialog, not to mention the game's tinny background music.

Times and technology have changed. Now thet 16-bit audio has replaced 8-bit, it's time to bid farewell to flat, FM-synthesized music. For realistic, full-bodied MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) music playback, you need a wavetable synthesis board—one that creates music by using recorded samples of real instruments instead of approximating them with a couple of sine waves. Fortunately, while wavetable boards that didn't even have Sound Blaster compatibility used to go for upwards of $500, just about every sound-card maker now sells a wavetable board with Sound Blaster emulation for less than half that amount.

Waveteble sound varies according to the quality of the board's synthesizers and the number of notes it can play simultaneously. To find out if we could hear the difference, we listened to six top wavetable boards: the Turtle Beach Tropez, Creative Labs Sound Blaster AWE32, Advanced Gravis Ultrasound ACE, Reveal SoundFX Wave, Turtle Beach Monte Carlo, and Orchid GameWave 32Plus. (Look for reviews of new wavetable cards from Media Vision, Ensoniq, and Brooktree in future issues.) We tested the boards with such popular games as Doom II and Under a Killing Moon, as well as with such Windows multimedia titles as Midisoft's MusicMagic Songbook.

We also considered ease of instellation. Unfortunately, like their FM-synthesis predecessors—and all PC add-in boards, for that matter, until Microsoft's Plug and Play standard is implemented—installing a wavetable board can be an agonizing process of trial and error as you root out IRQ and DMA conflicts. Thankfully, all of the cards we tested—except the UltraSound ACE—let you change these settings via software.



Wavetable sound cards. Left to right: Turtle Beach Tropez, Creative Labs Sound Blaster AWE32, Reveal SoundFX Wave, Advanced Gravis UltraSound ACE, Turtle Beach Monte Carlo, Orchid GamaWave 32Plus.

We tested the boards on an AT&T Globalyst 486/66 computar with Yamaha YST-SSW10 speakers and a Sony Enhanced IDE CD-ROM drive equipped with its own interface card. (If you want your sound board to do double-duty as a CD-ROM interface card, make sure that it has the right kind of interface for your system.) Once the boards were up and running, we checked out thair features: utilities, special effects, and bundled software and hardware.

Our top pick is the Turtle Beach Tropez, with the Creative Labs AWE32 in second place. The Advanced Gravis UltraSound ACE and the Reveal SoundFX Wave are good choices for the budget-conscious, while Orchid's GameWave 32 trailed the pack by a significant margin. The Turtle Beach Monte Carlo, a software wavetable board, sounded fine, but it doesn't work with DOS titles.

Turtle Beach Tropez

Turtle Beach has elways been known for its high-quality wavetable sound cards, but their lack of Sound Blaster compatibility and high price tags made them better suited for musiciens than gemers. The $249 Sound Blaster-compatible Tropez changes all that.

The top-rated Tropez produces excellent music; you'll have a hard time distinguishing between your PC and your stereo. And Doom II delivers pulse-pounding audio action that really draws you into the multimedia experience.

Along with great sound, Turtle Beech provides thoughtful touches to help ease installation: an excellent all-in-one manual with a large troubleshooting section, DOS and Windows

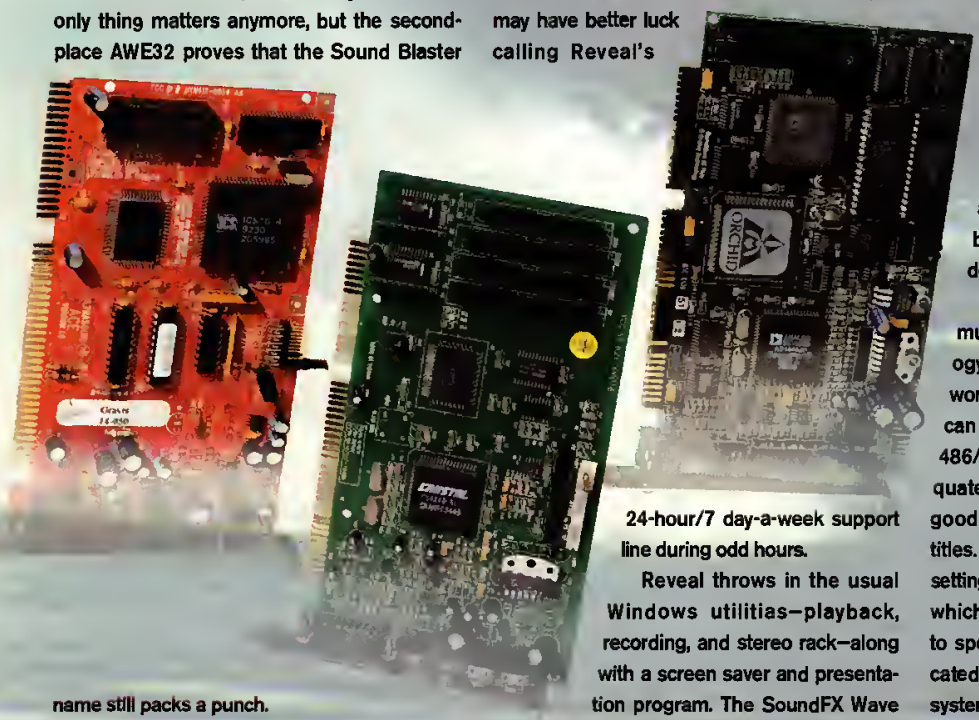
PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

test utilities, and an option for DOS-only or DOS and Windows installation.

Other extras include an Enhanced IDE CD-ROM interface; RAM expandability to 12MB; Windows recording, playback, and mixer utilities; and a Windows stereo rack program that plays audio CDs and .WAV or .MID files. (Turtle Beach; 800-645-5640; $249/street price $209)

Creative Labs Sound Blaster AWE32

"Sound Blaster-compatible" may not be the only thing matters anymore, but the second-place AWE32 proves that the Sound Blaster name still packs a punch.



Besides great sound, the AWE32 gives you lots of extras: DOS and Windows recording and playback utilities, a Windows stereo rack program, a Windows text-to-speech program, a Windows voice command-and-control program, a free-standing microphone, and more.

The AWE32's onboard digital signal processor handles many chores, including sound-file compression and decompression and support for QSound 3-D sound processing. The included QSound demos are fun, but you won't get this effect in your games unless they directly support the QSound standard. The AWE32 also lets you add reverb and chorus to the sounds you hear. The card has interfaces for Mitsumi, Sony, and Creative (Panasonic) CD-ROM drives. (Creative Labs; 800-998-1000; list price $399.99/street price $298)

Reveal SoundFX Wave

All the boards we tested use a 32-note synthesizer—except for the Reveal SoundFX Wave. The Reveal's 24-note synthesizer produces slightly flatter, less resonant sound than the top boards, but it's quite good for a board that costs $100 less.

The SoundFX Wave comes with a helpful installation video, but don't count on tech support if you run into any problems. We waited 30 minutes to talk to a technician. Of course, you may have better luck calling Reveal's 24-hour/7 day-a-week support line during odd hours.

Reveal throws in the usual Windows utilitias—playback, recording, and stereo rack—along with a screen saver and presentation program. The SoundFX Wave supports Sony, Panasonic Mitsumi and IDE CD-ROM drives. (Reveal; 800-326-2222; street price $149.99)

Advanced Gravis UltraSound ACE

An even less expensive way to get wavetable sound is to add the UltraSound ACE (Audio Card Enhancer) to your current sound card.

The ACE fits in a PC expansion slot and connects to your existing sound card's line-out jack. While Advanced Gravis expects the ACE to be a boost to your existing sound board, you can use it on its own as an Ultrasound-compatible sound card—that is, if you can do without the ability to record audio, a CD-ROM interface, and a joystick port. The ACE produces pleasing wavetable sound, and your existing sound card can supply Sound Blaster effects and music simultaneously.

As a bonus, Advanced Gravis throws in a CD-ROM packed with 14 shareware games—a nice change from the business- and music-oriented software that comes with most cards. (Advanced Gravis; 604-431-5020; $119/street price, $99)

Turtle Beach Monte Carlo

Software offers another inexpensive approach to getting wavetable sound. Turtle Beach's Monte Carlo is the first sound board to use natural signal processing technology to create a software-based wavetable synthesizer. Turtle Beach sells the Monte Carlo as a Windows wavetable adjunct to an existing FM synthesis card, but its Sound Blaster compatibility lets it do double duty as a stand-alone card.

This unusual approach produces quality music—and a few problems. VSynth technology (the wavetable software synthesizer) works only under Windows, so DOS gamers can forget wavetable. You need at least a 486/33 machine with 4MB of RAM for adequate performance, and more memory is a good idea for graphics-intensive Windows titles. Fortunately, you can changa the card's settings to use large or small instrument banks, which require different RAM overhead, and to specify how much of the CPU will be allocated to the synthesizer to help smooth out system performance.

The Monte Carlo's compromises mean that most FM-equipped budget watchers would do better to add the UltraSound ACE. (Turtla Beach; 800-645-5640; $149/street price $99)

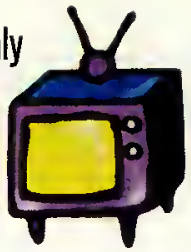
Orchid GameWave 32Plus

The GameWave 32Plus is more expensive than the ACE and the Monte Carlo, but it sounds cheap. It produced the poorest wavetable sound of any board tests—flatter and more muffled than the other cards.

Orchid also skimps on the software, providing only DOS and Windows control panels. The one bright spot: an excellent 4-year warranty. The GameWave has Sony and Mitsumi CD-ROM drive interfaces. (Orchid Technologies; 510-683-0300; $169)

TECH SHOP

By James Daly



Two-Way TV

Sixty years after Philo T. Farnsworth first demonstrated a television system, his amazing invention remains almost exactly as he left it. You sit; it shows. Sure, you can now pick up color *Baywatch* reruns in Borneo, and the quality of the picture has steadily improved, but TV remains a passive display system.

That is set to change with the introduction of interactive television. For the price of a typical monthly cable bill, you'll get movies-on-demand, home shopping, networked multiplayer video games, the ability to print what you see via a color printer, and more. Turn on your set and arrange to have your local Plymouth dealer bring a car by for a test drive. Tell Coca-Cola you'd love to get a coupon good for 75 cents off a six-pack of Coke—and a small printer on the machine spits it out. Punch in a few numbers on your remote control and play the ponies at the local track. Opinion polling in real time during the nightly evening newscast will let you put in your two cents worth. Want more? OK, someday soon you may just hit a couple of buttons and cast your vote for the next President of the United States. And if politics isn't your bag, don't worry: Every entertainment provider in the country, from TV networks to cable companies to movie studios, is dreaming of getting rich supplying interactive content.

Before that can happen, though, the service providers need a fast two-way pipeline into your house. Until the information highway is paved with fiber-optic cable for high-volume information exchange, each interactive television system must move data using some combination of broadcast signals, satellite transmission, radio waves, and phone and cable lines.

Regardless of how the service connects to your set, there are essentially three major components that make up just about all interactive TV designs: the set-top box, a distribution network, and the interactive TV provider's server complex.

The **set-top box** sends and receives information in both directions between the interactive TV provider and you, the interactive couch potato. Most of the first interactive TV boxes look like regular cable boxes on steroids and are controlled by infrared **remote control devices** that let you make selections on-screen. Inside the box, there's a powerful computer processor and a sophisticated operating system. In addition to high-bandwidth two-way connectivity with the TV server, a set-top box must decode the digital audio and video media sent by the main server and then translate it into a form that can be displayed by the television. The set-top box also needs to render the stylish graphical interface that appears on your TV screen. As if that weren't enough, the

Interactive TV On Trial

So what is interactive TV really like? A few families in Orlando, Florida, are already finding out.

"After having this, I wouldn't want to go back (to regular television)," swears Diane Gerry, an Orlando resident testing Time Warner Cable's Full Service Network (FSN). Gerry enjoys the speed and convenience of interactive television.

The test families—a group scheduled to grow to 4,000 by the end of 1995—pay about $3 each for digital-quality movies that can be fast-forwarded with no "static" lines and can be paused while viewers are away from the TV. "We've even started a movie, eaten dinner, and come back," says Susan Willard, another FSN trial subscriber.

Test subscribers can also visually "walk" through the FSN mall, which includes products from clothes to drapes from companies such as Spiegel, Crate & Barrel, Chrysler, and Warner Brothers. "I broke a glass, and just went in (to the mall) and ordered a set. It came in four days," Willard says.

When viewers log on to the shopping channels, they can look at new specials, review their last order, or just browse around the store. Soon, trial members will be able to shop for groceries by visually clicking on a picture of a product. They'll even be able to turn it around to read the ingredients and nutrition information on the back. Time Warner plans to add educational services for families and local schools, a music mall, and news, sports, and HBO on demand.

The trial already includes 13 Atari Jaguar games, as well as multiplayer games like Gin Rummy. "I think the interactive games make it more exciting," comments Diane Gerry, while 15-year-old Tim Blackmon thinks it's "neat" to play expensive games for free.

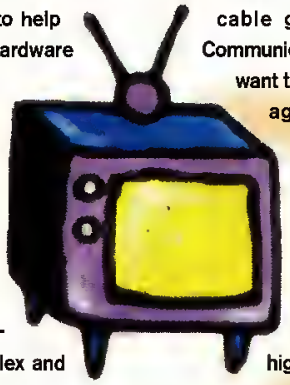
—Christine Blank

ITV At a Glance

Interactive TV Type	What will it provide?	How does it work?	What do you need to get it?	When will it arrive?
Direct TV	150 channels and pay-per-view; not yet interactive.	Satellites send programs directly to viewers.	A small (18-inch) satellite dish and a special decoder box plus a service provider.	You can buy it today at your local electronics store for about $700.
Advanced Cable	As many as 500 channels and pay-per-view.	Digital video compression techniques will let more information be sent over today's cable network.	A new decoder box with video decompression capabilities plus a cable service that supports the extra channels.	Tests are going on now, but widespread use is not expected until 1996.
"Smart" Cable	Hundreds of viewing options and easy-to-use onscreen menus.	A continuous stream of video data is monitored by a high-end cable box. The box can then select and download whatever information users want whenever they want it, without having to conform to a set schedule.	New, advanced cable services, a high-powered, "smart" set-top box/decoder, and possibly fiber-optic cable.	Tests are going on now, but even limited use is not expected until 1996.
Media Server/ Information Highway	Instant access to nearly any information source, from books to movies to music to catalogs; on-screen menus help users find the information they want.	A high-speed, nationwide data network combines with high-end computers working as "media servers."	Special cable or telephone service plus a powerful set-top box or personal computer.	Limited applications are already available on the Internet and online services. Faster connections, possibly provided by a nationwide fiber-optic network, are needed for complete implementation.

Source: Oracle Corp.

system must also support a wide variety of peripherals, such as printers, joysticks, and perhaps even keyboards or microphones for voice recognition. Companies hoping to help create set-top boxes, from the hardware itself to the operating system it runs, include computer outfits like Microsoft, Silicon Graphics, and Hewlett-Packard, as well as traditional cable-box manufacturers like Scientific Atlanta and General Instrument.



A **distribution network** (usually fiber-optic cable) carries information between the server complex and the subscribers' set-top boxes. It's still not economical to run fiber-optic cable to every home, so the network uses nodes that convert the light signals carried by the fiber into electromagnetic signals carried by standard coaxial cable. Typically, the cheaper coaxial cable carries signals to and from as many as 500 homes in a single neighborhood. This is where cable giants like Viacom, Tele-Communications Inc., and Time Warner want to make their play—competing against the Bell companies, among others.

The **server complex** consists of large, powerful computers and storage systems at a central site. There's also an interconnection network that provides high-speed two-way communications between different elements of the complex. Typically, each server must transmit at least 1.2GB of data per second; sending dozens of high-quality video feeds to subscribers requires a fire hose, not a sprinkler.

High-end computer and software makers like Sun Microsystems, Oracle, and Digital Equipment Corp. see interactive TV servers as a huge new market.

It all sounds good, but it's a long way from reality. For interactive TV to really click, companies need to go beyond tiny trials in a dozen or so test markets to become nationally available. That won't be possible until the price of hooking up drops substantially. A recent Forrester Research study suggests that companies such as Bell Atlantic and Time Warner expect to shell out from $12,000 to $17,000 to hook up a household. Such a high setup cost means a payback period of some 10 to 15 years. With those kinds of numbers, Forrester projects that only 5-10 million homes will be hooked into an interactive television network by the year 2000. In the meantime, the PC, not the TV, will remain the center of most interactive services.

TECH SHOP

S.O.S.

Getting a handle on ergonomic keyboards, pegging MPEG compatibility, and unpleasant memories with U.S. Navy Fighters.

Ergonomically Inclined

I've seen a lot of weird-looking keyboards out there, including some that are split in the middle. What's the difference? How much do they cost? Are they really worth it?
Jose Carrion
No Address

Repeat after me: "Lizzie Borden took an axe..." Actually, what you've been witnessing is the incursion of ergonomics into computer design. Those weird keyboards, such as Microsoft's Windows Keyboard and Kinesis' Ergonomic Keyboard, are designed to try and keep your hands and wrists as safe and comfortable as possible.

Standard rectangular keyboards are relatively easy—and cheap—to manufacture, but they've never been designed with any real regard to the human hand. I don't know about you, but my fingers tend to fall naturally into a curve, not a straight line. Ergonomic keyboards generally place the keys in a more natural position for your fingers and hands. The idea is that your fingers and wrists won't have to stretch, bend, and work as much, so that carpal-tunnel syndrome and other repetitive-motion disorders should pose less of a problem.

How well do they work? The makers claim they work great, but computer ergonomics is still a pretty new science. Until a lot of people have used these keyboards over the course of several years, it's unlikely that we'll know exactly how effective they are in reducing repetitive-motion disorders. The keyboards—especially the higher-quality professional ones—also tend to be expensive, setting you back as much as several hundred dollars. Cheaper ones are available for less than $100, but you have to wonder exactly how much research went into the design of a $50 keyboard. And a bad ergonomic design could cause you more harm than good.

If you're experiencing pain or numbness in your fingers, wrists, or forearms when working at a keyboard, see a doctor. He or she may be able to recommend some ergonomic aids such as wrist rests for your current keyboard, or may know of a good ergonomic keyboard you could try. But be warned: You may find actually typing on these ergonomic keyboards takes some getting used to.

Pick a (MPEG) Card

Okay, so I want to buy one of the new MPEG cards I see all over the place. How can I be sure that it will work with the MPEG titles available? I don't want to spend $400 on a new card only to find out that I can't run anything on it.
Steve Morse
Paisley, Florida

You're a PC user, and you want to be sure about something? You're new to this, aren't you?

Honestly, there's no way to guarantee that interactive MPEG titles will run on various MPEG cards. About the only sure thing you can count on is that titles written specifically for Sigma Design's Real Magic MPEG playback cards should run on those cards, but probably won't run on any other brand of board.

Things should change—eventually. An industry group called OM1 is working on a standard that defines a common way for developers to implement MPEG into their DOS titles. But establishing a standard, working out all the bugs, and getting hardware and software makers to adhere to it takes time. Microsoft has also announced MPEG support in Windows 95 and indicated that hardware and software products compatible with the Microsoft standard will get some kind of "Microsoft MPEG compatible" logo stamped on them. But don't hold your breath for that either, since Windows 95 is still months away.

Trust me, hardware makers would love for you to be able to run every MPEG title on their boards, and they'll keep doing everything they can to help you reach that point. But until then, unless you buy software specifically made for your brand of MPEG board, you're going to be stuck playing MPEG roulette.

Memory Loss

I have a question regarding memory requirements and game performance. I recently bought a copy of Electronic Arts' U.S. Navy Fighters. My machine is a 486DX2/66 with 6MB of RAM. The game says it prefers 8MB, but that it will run in only 4MB.

I was extremely displeased with the speed of the game. Even in 640-by-480 resolution, I had to turn off most of the details to get reasonable performance.

I really liked U.S. Navy Fighters, but I returned it because of its poor performance. Soon, I will be putting another 4MB of RAM in my system. Will this additional RAM speed up game play? I'm mostly interested in U.S. Navy Fighters, but I am also curious about the performance of other games that say they require 4MB of RAM but prefer 8MB. Do these games turn off certain options when running on a system with less RAM, or do they just run more slowly overall?
Brian Hitney
Buchanan, NY

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID POVILAITIS

For starters, let me just say that U.S. Navy Fighters is a great game. Let me also say that with all the details turned on at the higher resolutions, U.S. Navy Fighters will make a 90MHz Pentium with 16MB of RAM and a fast PCI local-bus video card crawl like a stunned turtle.

You can almost never go wrong by adding more memory to your PC. Adding more memory will make many games run much faster, especially if you're starting with 4MB or less on your machine. Some games, including Under a Killing Moon and Unnecessary Roughness, need 16MB of RAM to run their best. Games like these use the extra RAM as a high-speed storage area for sounds and graphics.

To run their titles on computers with limited memory, game developers can take three approaches:

- Reduce the number of game features by eliminating sounds, dropping graphics resolution, and removing shading and texture maps.
- Slow the "frame-rate" or perceived "speed" of the game. Some games let you keep all the graphics and sound options, but go out to the hard disk to retrieve needed data instead of getting it from the much faster RAM. This tactic can dramatically slow down a game and result in jerky, slow-motion graphics.
- Both of the above.

Adding more RAM gives the game more space to stretch out and do its stuff. Unfortunately, all the RAM in the world won't help some games. Even with your extra 4MB of RAM, U.S. Navy Fighters will still run slowly with all the options turned on, though probably not as slowly as it did with 6MB of RAM. You'll just have to give it a try to see if the improvement is enough to satisfy you.

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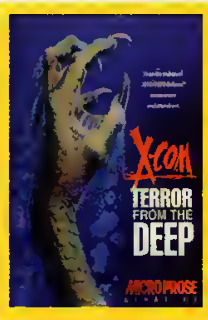

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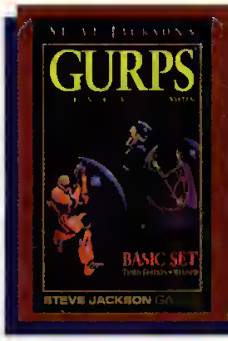

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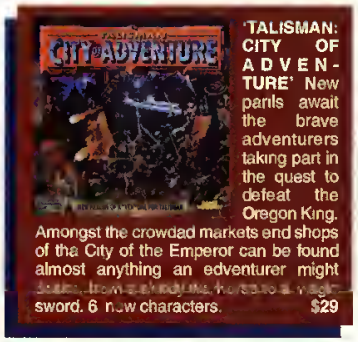

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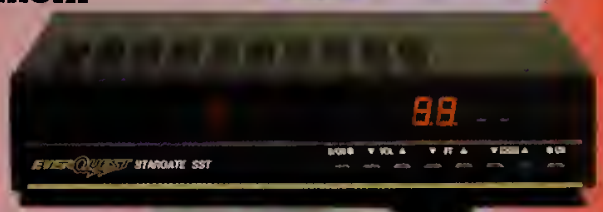

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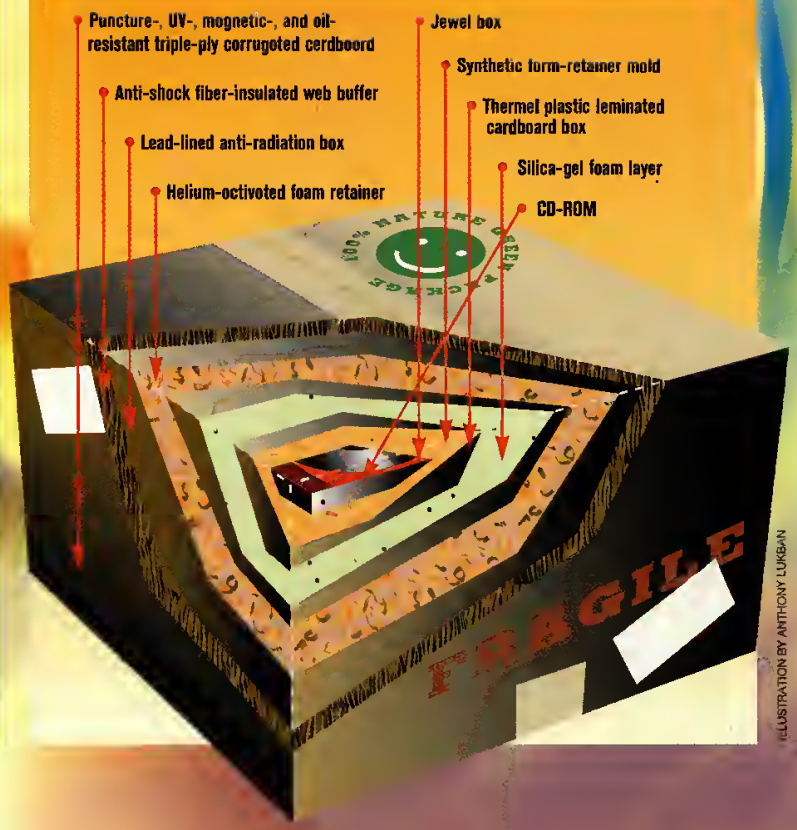

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